PROFESSIONAL

RADIO WRITING

ALBERT CREWS

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THE HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
RADIO BROADCASTING SERIES

Albert Crews
EDITOR

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PROFESSIONAL RADIO WRITING

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To

L. McS. C.

PREFACE

BEFORE WE PLUNGE into the business of radio writing there is an understanding which must be reached between the author and the reader concerning the philosophy behind the organization and content of this book. Unless there is such an understanding, much that follows might be subject to misinterpretation by the reader, who, presumably, is about to become a writer. The following is the basic approach to the problem of writing for radio as it is set forth in this book.

It should be understood that no one can learn to write by reading a book about writing. One learns to write by writing. Such a volume as this can serve only as a guide along the way, as a series of warnings against certain pitfalls, and as a handbook of practical information.

After the painful first-hand process of writing, the time comes to receive criticism (to administer self-criticism), and to follow this by rewriting. The cycle is repeated over and over again; and out of this process eventually comes an understanding of the techniques that make for brilliant, clear, concise, exciting writing. Learning to write is a process of learning to rewrite.

The business of writing for any medium involves three distinct steps. The first step is to gather material with which to write. The second is to put the material into a specific form for presentation in a given field. The third step in the process is marketing. Anyone who stands on the threshold of the writing profession must recognize all three processes in terms of their relative importance. Too many mentors in the teaching of writing concern themselves only with the development of skill in expression, ignoring the obvious fact that, before one can write well, one must have something to say and someone to say it to.

Preparing to write is something that one does over a period of years, not days, weeks, or months. Great writing, in any medium, comes only with the maturity of the writer himself.

Quite naturally, some writers mature faster than others, but each writer must have a coming-of-age before he can make a significant contribution. It is with these basic principles in mind that we approach the problem of writing for radio.

One thing should be said about writing specifically for the medium of radio. No writer coming to this field as an outlet for his talent should underestimate the medium in which he is working. There are many ways of measuring the effectiveness of a medium for a writer. We might say that a medium is effective in terms of the number of people it reaches, the depth to which it moves them, and the length of time they remember its message. Few other modes of expression are able to touch their audience more deeply than radio, and certainly no other offers an audience of such tremendous size. These facts place upon the radio writer a responsibility which no writer worthy of the name should accept lightly. Knowing the depth to which he can touch people, and the number of people he can reach, he must approach his job with great humility and a sense that the power in his hands must be used wisely and well.

These, then, are the basic principles upon which this book has been written, to which everything in the book will conform; they are principles which any potential radio writer must accept before he decides to step over the threshold into the still new and tremendously exciting field of radio writing. There has never been a time in the history of the world when interpreters of the current scene who are honest, sane, courageous, and clear-seeing, were so badly needed. And there has never been a time when writers who could meet that challenge have had available such a satisfactory medium in which to work. If this book can help a few people along that path, then it will have served its purpose.

ALBERT CREWS

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PROLOGUE

A Charge to Writers

WHEN YOU SET OUT *to become a writer, you must accept an inherited responsibility of the profession. Writers in every age have been an important influence on the times in which they lived. The best of them have been the thinkers, the leaders, the philosophers of their time. In addition, they have been the reporters of events, the mirror of customs and manners, the editorialists, the pin-prickers of pomp, and the champions of great causes. It is inevitable that this should be so. The writer is one who, by necessity of his profession, stands off and looks at life as it is. His is the nearest approach to historical perspective that is possible in contemporary life.*

The beginning writer usually starts out with ideas of reforming the world and creating new worlds of art. When his writing ceases to be an academic affair, and when he is faced with paying the rent with the income from his typewriter, he too frequently undergoes a strange metamorphosis. The gallant knight storming the battlements of art too often becomes a scared small boy wondering where he can find a door to get a toe in. Some of this change is inevitable, but if the beginning writer can somehow hang on to some of that first idealism about his work, his work will be better.

If the writer learns and grows, perhaps he will regain some of his enthusiastic desire to reform the world. Certainly he will be impressed with his responsibility to report the world. In times like these, the responsibility is a heavy one, indeed. Any serious observer of the current scene must have a sense of bafflement at its complexity. But with maturity comes a mellowness and tolerance which may bring the picture into focus in the camera of his mind.

Every beginning writer should promise himself to do an honest job. No matter how short he may fall of his goal, he should aim for it in every piece of writing he does. The temptations of quick turn-over and large profits are great. Hack work is always easy *to do. But the good writer will never let anything leave his desk until he is satisfied that it is the best he can do.*

Guard against impatience. A young writer must realize his limitations. Only years of living and observing will bring him a partial understanding of a world that is often beyond comprehension. He will see much in his writing years. He will see cheapness and petty jealousy and ugliness. He will see faith broken in public office and men broken by lies. But, if he looks, he will also see honesty and great-hearted generosity. He will see in the man in the street a simple faith—a faith that has up to now withstood every attempt to shake it. And he will know people with a deep belief in the basic goodness of man.

In the course of his work, he will meet the great and grow to be flippant about them. He will some day meet the common man and grow humble before him. As his wisdom grows, he may learn to see the bond between the great and the common, and realize how short and strong it is.

He must see all these things and record them in his mind. As he sees more and more, he will seek for a pattern made by these isolated facts. Gradually, he will see the pattern take shape and reveal the motivations of human existence. And as he sees it, he will report it. But before he reports it, he will filter it through the alchemy of his own mind, and distill off the illusion, leaving only the truth.

Growth in insight is a part of the process of maturing. In proportion to his capacity to grow, so will his writing grow. And as the young radio writer grows, his understanding of and respect for his medium must and will increase. The surface impression of chromium and black glass will pass. Eventually, he will come to realize that the medium he has chosen is one of the most potent forces in the world. When he sits down to his typewriter, he will realize that he is undertaking a contract with millions of people which he must do his best to fulfill. He will think of the vast number of ears that will lean to his message. With this realization must come a humbleness in the face of the job he has elected to do. Humility, together with pride in his calling and an effort to see things clearly and to see them whole, may make of him someday a writer worthy of the medium in which he works.

1

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

CHAPTER 1

WRITING — A WAY OF LIFE

WRITING FOR RADIO is a broad, all-inclusive activity which, cutting across many allied fields, is not a single job, but a combination of several complex ones. Certain kinds of radio writing must be considered as purely business occupations, or, even more specifically, sales occupations. Other kinds can be considered only as "work." There is also radio writing that may be considered creative art. Radio writing must, therefore, be defined broadly enough to include these various kinds of writing, whether you plan to write commercial credits for an advertising agency, or gag continuity for a variety show, or purely dramatic forms for network evening programs. You will still be doing writing for the radio, and your conception of the job must be broad enough to include all these various aspects.

Writers are sometimes divided roughly into three classes. There is the writer who writes purely for the sake of eating. He regards his work, not as a profession, but as a job to be done so that he can receive a pay check at the end of a given period. This kind of writer does uninspired hack work which fails to furnish him the stimulation he needs to do something better. Of course, there is in radio, as in any other medium, plenty of hack work to be done and someone must do it. Since not all writers develop great skill or profundity, a large segment of the writing profession will always be doing this kind of work.

The second group of writers must be classed as propagandists or crusaders. They are concerned with writing, not as an end in itself, but as a means to promote some idea to which they have dedicated themselves. Nearly all speakers over the radio, exclusive of news commentators, come into this category. Their purpose is not to do effective writing for the medium of radio, but to advance certain ideas.

The third category is the group that represents the highest ideals and attainments of the profession. Let us call this group, for want of a better title, the observer-reporter-interpreter group. The writer in this group is not concerned with hack assignments or the grinding-out of a given number of words per day. Neither is he concerned with the selling of a product, an idea, or a political philosophy. He watches the world and the things that go on in it, and calls the plays as he sees them. His job is to present events and people as he sees them, and to interpret them as best he can for the rest of the world. Among the writers in this group are the true creators in the field of radio writing who have a common understanding with all the other men of the world who have looked on life and mankind and reported what they have seen. If there is any hope for greatness in radio, it must come from such men.

It would be an interesting experiment to try to break down a day's broadcasting into the three categories mentioned and see into which category the writer of each program would fall.

Regardless of the field of writing in which you may happen to find yourself, there must be much of this latter attitude permeating your work if it is to be the best of which you are capable. Even though you are called upon to do straightforward, everyday continuity writing, even if you are doing writing of a commercial nature, you will be effective in direct proportion to your ability to look upon the world and see it for what it is. It is only when you have touched the final deep undercurrents of people's lives that you come to an understanding of human nature which will enable you to do your best work in writing for radio.

You will probably have little conscious choice as to the kind of writer you turn out to be. What you become as a writer will depend largely on your own background and the peculiar combination of personality factors that make you the person you are. It does not matter into which of these categories you fall so long as you are doing the best job of which you are capable within your field.

Writing, in its final essence, is having something to say to people. No individual is endowed by the Almighty with this inherent gift of having something to say. A writer has something to say only after he has filled himself with living. As a potential writer, you must look upon yourself as a reservoir, at first almost completely empty. Until you have filled your reservoir to the point of running over, you will never write. It is only when you are soaked so full of things to say that they spill over in spite of you that you will become an effective writer.

Writing is a phenomenon which occurs when the personality of the author reacts so strongly to what is going on around him that the reaction itself creates a new quantity. This experience is akin to reaction. One member of the equation is the experience of the writer; the other part is his personality. When these two are thrown into contact, a third phenomenon is created, and that phenomenon is good writing. This process of filling your personal reservoir of facts, experiences, observations, acquaintances, is not something which takes place automatically or rapidly. It is a process that takes time. That is why few great writers have written anything of importance in their early years. The young writer still has a reservoir that is taking in instead of giving out. Only when the reservoir is full to overflowing can the writer begin the process of giving out what has been taken in, with a new significance added by his own personality. Only at that point does worth-while writing result. It must be understood also that the process is continuous. One does not write by soaking up a certain amount of experience and then giving it forth again; to fill the reservoir over and over again, so that it is always full to the brim, is the only process by which writing can continue to be significant. There must be a constant search for new meanings, new interpretations of the passing scene.

A writer should dedicate himself to the outward look. He cannot concern himself only with himself. He must concern himself with people and places, with experiences, with long observations, with deep insight into the ways people act. This is a process which begins at the moment when he decides to become a writer and which continues as long as he writes. Unless the potential author understands this demand, he will never succeed. If he can look upon life and people, develop a deep desire to understand them, and then spend the rest of life working out that desire, he has an excellent chance of becoming a writer.

It is also necessary to develop an attitude of objectivity. If you allow yourself to become too much embroiled in what you see, what you feel, and what you come to understand, you cease to be an observer-reporter-interpreter, and become instead a propagandist. Writing is not then the ultimate end of your effort. You must not only develop a love for life and a zest for living, but also an objectivity which permits you to see the whole game without allowing yourself to become drawn into it. As soon as you step off the sidelines and onto the playing field, you step out of the position of the observer and into the position of the participant.

Nevertheless, you cannot write effectively about anything which you do not yourself know at firsthand. Inevitably, therefore, if you are going to write about many subjects, you must know many things at firsthand. This process of learning, of meeting life and people and experiences, must be the major concern of the first years of your writing existence. Perhaps it is for this reason that so many of our best serious writers were first journalists. By the very nature of their profession, newspapermen are constantly in the position of the observer-reporter-interpreter. They are seeing important things happen. They are seeing people at the crises of their lives. They are seeing events shape themselves, and, by this very fact of their ringside seat in the theater of living, they have an undeniably enviable preparation for writing. The average reporter, in the normal course of his professional career, can in six months gain more experience that will help him as a writer than most other people can in six years. It is not necessary, however, to become a newspaper reporter in order to put yourself on the road toward being a successful writer. There is a constant opportunity every day to meet people, to see new things, to add to your storehouse of experience.

No matter how you regard writing, you must consider it as more than a job. Writing is a way of life. It is one profession which transcends business hours, working hours, the routine part of the business day, and permeates the practitioner's entire existence. Some professions can be practiced during the working day and then dropped when evening comes. There are others in which this relaxation is not possible. For the writer, his profession is his way of life just as completely as is the doctor's profession his way of life. No doctor is ever completely free of his work. He is, and by the nature of his work must be, on call twenty-four hours of the day. So, too, the writer can never entirely divorce himself from his work. It will color his social life, his philosophy, his religion, his friendships, even his relations with his own family.

The potential writer who does not recognize this all-inclusive nature of his work should never step over the threshold of the writing field. Unless he is willing to subordinate most of the rest of his existence to his job, he should never attempt to write. It should not be assumed that the hold which the writing profession takes of one's life is an unpleasant one. The kind of life which a writer lives is probably as exciting, as packed with interest, as any that one could follow.

This leads to the first step in the writing process. We have said that writing is a threefold job: the business of gathering material, the business of putting this material down in an effective manner, and the business of seeing that it reaches the ultimate consumer. It is not enough to say that you must go out and meet life and observe it. If you are going to be practical about radio writing, you must have a practical approach to this first step, the business of getting acquainted with life and learning how and where to gather material about which to write. This is the practical means by which one answers the inevitable question of the beginner — "What shall I write about?"

CHAPTER 2

FILLING THE RESERVOIR

The filling of a writer's reservoir of human experience has a threefold purpose. First, it will bring him gradually to an understanding of human nature and the motivations with which people act – an understanding essential for every writer. In the second place, it will give him an inexhaustible encyclopedia of seemingly unrelated factual material which he will sooner or later discover he needs. During the course of his career, he will write about a thousand subjects and find many other thousands about which he will need to know something. The process of gathering material will do much to help fill out the general background of information which he will need in his work. The third need which this process serves is that of actually getting something specific to write about. The mere gathering of material will result often in direct leads for ideas which may eventually become a radio script of importance. As a writer goes about the process of gathering material, he must be conscious of the three objectives toward which he is working. He will be adding to his general understanding, he will be soaking up innumerable facts which he will need, and finally he will be discovering specific ideas for programs which will eventually result in actual writing.

It is all very well to talk about the necessity of gaining experience in order to write, but the advice is vague and indefinite unless it can be reduced to specific terms. Any tactical problem becomes solvable only when it is reduced to a specific method of operation. It is just this reduction to the specific which the present chapter will attempt.

What follows is a specific plan of action for gaining experience, for meeting new people, for putting oneself in the way of new ideas, and, in general, for opening every possible avenue to the development of personal capacity for living. Because individuals differ widely, some of these techniques may be more valuable than others. Only after trying many of them will the writer eventually discover those which are the most advantageous for him. He will, inevitably, develop techniques other than those included here. These are meant only as guideposts to help him start to live as a writer must.

The Contemplation Period

Set aside for yourself thirty minutes every day to devote to what we shall call, for want of a better term, contemplation. It is not important that you do this at any specific time of day or at the same time every day. But it is important that at least once a day you sit down and stop all activity for thirty minutes. Plan to do absolutely nothing during this time except to stay awake and to keep your eyes open. If you do these two things, you will inevitably find that your mind is increasingly active. Eventually out of this mental activity will come usable ideas for writing.

The place you choose for this daily contemplative half-hour, or the circumstances, do not matter greatly; the important thing is to insure that you have nothing else to do. Nature abhors a vacuum. If you will try to make of yourself, mentally, a vacuum, nature will take care of the process of filling it. Most Americans seem anxious to avoid thought. They are obsessed with the idea of speed. They whip across the continent in no time, only to have needless time on their hands when they arrive at their destination. Even when they travel, they take books along. They read. They buy magazines. They practically invent "busy-work" to keep themselves from having to be alone with themselves. A writer could use such time advantageously for the business of contemplation.

So devote thirty minutes every day exclusively to the opening of your mind. Let what will come in through any of the senses. During this time you should not even try to think of things about which to write. Do not bother to think at all. Just keep your eyes open, your senses alert, and see what comes to you. Get yourself into a position where, if possible, you can eliminate bodily action, so that all factors of distraction are removed. Then – let it happen. After you have done this for a week, you will be amazed at the inrush of thoughts that will come to you. You will have time to observe things in your immediate surroundings which you never before took time to see. You will see people whom you never saw before. You will note associations between ideas which never before occurred to you. The process of creating an intellectual vacuum into which thoughts, ideas, association may come will pay off in terms of writing ideas.

There is one other thing you must do during this period of observation: jot down those things which occur to you as they come along. Ideas are as elusive as dreams, and they must be captured when they occur. You should, therefore, have with you at these contemplation periods some cards on which you can jot down any ideas which come along. Keep your notes brief. They should serve only as a reminder of the things you thought about. They can be amplified later.

You may discover that days will go by during which nothing significant occurs to you. Your total accumulation for a week may be only a series of irrelevant doodlings on your note cards. But on the eighth day or the eighteenth, something may come along which will be the push-off on a script of real merit. You can be sure that this practice, kept up long enough and consistently enough, pays dividends. It may seem a very simple way of going about the writing process, but it is highly effective.

If you select for your contemplation period a place where there is much activity around you, there will naturally be more stimuli available than there will be if you choose a cloistered room. Either place, however, will bring results. Try first a quiet place where there are not too many distractions, and then, as you begin to master the technique, move into more crowded spots. This practice is not one that can be tried as a lark for a week and then abandoned. It should be part of your daily routine; you should ingrain it into your life so that it becomes an inevitable part of your daily habit of living. No one realizes better than the successful professional writer that his whole process of gathering material is one which must be constantly practiced.

Meet New People

The next step in filling your reservoir and gathering material about which to write is meeting new people. You need to have a fairly thorough acquaintance with literally thousands of people of all kinds and types. Creative writers tend to divide themselves into two general groups: those who write about nature and those who write about people. Of these two, the latter is by all odds the larger group and usually draws the bigger audience. If you are going to write about people, you must know at firsthand a great many people in all walks of life and in as many parts of the world as you can.

Most people are familiar with the extrovert who can walk into any situation and strike up a conversation on a moment's notice with a total stranger. This is the kind of person whose expansive personality dominates the club cars on transcontinental trains and the businessmen's clubs all over the country. Unfortunately, this kind of expansive extrovert seldom has the keen sensitivity which might make him a writer. He is so absorbed in spreading his own personality around that he has neither the patience nor the point of view which would allow him to absorb the ideas and personalities of other people. The person who has the innate sensitivity to make a good writer often tends to be an introvert who unfortunately draws away from people rather than moves toward them. It is, therefore, highly desirable that the potential writer, early in his career, develop some kind of technique for forcing himself into contact with many different people. This technique is much more easily described than carried out, because of certain innate traits.

One of these inhibitions is man's hate and fear of the unknown! This dread dominates, not only most of his major decisions in life, but many minor decisions every day. Given a choice between following a procedure with which he is familiar and following a new procedure, he will tend to take the familiar one. Try to remember the last time you attended a large party at which you knew only two or three of those present. Can you remember what happened? You probably moved into the group, made polite noises to your host or hostess, and having been turned on your own, made a beeline across the room to those two or three people in the group whom you knew. If you are a writer, this is the most unintelligent course of action which you could take. Finding yourself in a situation where there are, let us say, three known quantities and twenty-five unknown, why do you proceed to those quantities which you know? The answer is simple. You do it because you are afraid of the unknown. This is not a major fear and is usually not even a conscious one. It is, therefore, all the more insidious. You tend to follow the line of least resistance, and by so doing you may pass up a gold mine of information and the personal contact which is one of your most valuable stocks in trade. The successful writer would probably reverse this normal process. He would ignore the people he knows with as little passing comment as possible and proceed immediately to the new factors in the situation, hoping for new ideas, new characters, and a new way of looking at life.

This tendency to dig for yourself familiar grooves and then go through those grooves time and time again is a perfectly normal, natural pattern of behavior. Because you are lazy, and because you are afraid of the unknown, you tend to establish routines which you repeat over and over. For the average individual this is a harmless, although rather dull, habit. For the writer, it is professional suicide. He must make a habit of always hunting the new contacts, the new individual, the new place, the new information, all of which is a part of his procedure of gathering material.

Not only must a writer meet many new people, but he must meet those in all walks of life. Most of us tend to draw our friends from our own immediate environment. They come from the same social class, the same economic level, and very often from within our own profession. Doctors tend to make other doctors their friends. Journalists tend to associate with other journalists. As a writer, you must break down this easy way of forming human contacts and make your spread of acquaintance as broad and as catholic as possible. You must know rich men, poor men, businessmen, shysters, engineers, technicians, flyers, navigators, artists, and scientists. You must spread your contacts vertically and horizontally through the entire social structure. If you can travel, you must spread your contacts geographically as widely as possible. Sooner or later, you will need to have the information and background which all these people can give you.

Many people in other occupations do not feel the need for a widely spread group of acquaintances. They have no need for human contacts beyond those which their immediate environment offers. It is more work to talk to a stranger than to someone you know, and human laziness always encourages us to follow the line of least resistance. Acquiring a wide circle of contacts, not necessarily friends, requires time and effort and the average individual does not have the motivation to expend that additional energy. The writer has all the motivation in the world; to him it is a matter of necessity.

If you have no technique for meeting new people, then you must develop one. There is no common technique which suits all individuals or all personalities, but there are a few basic suggestions which will help almost anyone in trying to form new contacts. Remember these basic facts:

1. People react expansively to sincere interest from other people.
2. People will always talk about themselves.
3. People will usually talk about their work.
4. People will often talk about their prejudices.

Knowing these facts, you have a good start toward developing a technique in talking to strange people. Impertinent curiosity is one thing; honest interest in the problems of another human being is something else. To this latter approach, people make an almost universal friendly response. It is a rare person who will not open up to you if you have a sincere and honest interest in his problems, his work, his points of view. Remember this: anyone's favorite subject of conversation is himself. If you can encourage people to talk about themselves and show a genuine interest in what they have to say, your problem of making contacts with new people is solved. Once you can assume this basic interest in people, all the rest of the problem is simple.

It is imperative that you recognize at once that making contacts with people takes time. This expenditure of time is a part of your investment as a writer, just as surely as that of a mechanic in buying himself a good set of tools. The time you invest in being with people and in coming to know them is the best possible investment you can make in a writing career. You must not look upon it as something which keeps you from your typewriter. You will find that the time spent on people will force you to your typewriter.

Let us bring one criticism out into the open right now. When we talk of "making contacts" and "meeting people," we open ourselves to the charge that we are only *using* people. It may be said that we are scraping acquaintances only for what we can wring out of them — a very cold-blooded and mercenary process. What a writer needs is the exact opposite of this attitude. The whole secret of success in making the acquaintance of people may be summed up this way: if he seeks out people and can scrape acquaintances only for the good they can do him, they will do him no good; if he seeks out people with a wish to understand them and a hope to get acquainted with them, he will succeed.

The following discussion on how to make contacts with people is very pointed and practical. It may even sound calculating. But it must be direct because many beginning writers pull away from making new contacts. It is not meant to be — and must not become — a selfish business. Seeking out people to quiz them, to sap their ideas and pick their brains, is a brazen, annoying, impolite procedure which can bring only harm to the writer. Good taste and common politeness should guide you always. And the magic word that opens all doors is an honest, sincere interest in people.

There is only one sure way to go about this process of meeting people. You must work at it and take time for it. There are no magic formulas. It simply demands thought, hard work, and giving a great deal of yourself to the job. One example may help. Why not take time to become acquainted with the dozens of people who cross your path in the pursuit of your daily routine? Get acquainted with your newsboy, your milkman, your meter reader, your grocer. You have many people working every day to give you the comforts of modern living. Take time to meet them and talk to them. They will give you an excellent cross-section of the life of your immediate community. People living in small towns are more naturally friendly than city folk. In small towns everybody has the opportunity and takes the time to get acquainted with his neighbors. In the city it is very easy to live in an apartment house for five years and not know the persons in the apartments on either side of you.

Anyone who is not a recluse has ample opportunity to meet all kinds of people. The writer will learn to take these opportunities rather than to dodge them. He will learn that to welcome every chance to make new acquaintances is the essence of his success.

As you proceed along this path, you will discover an interesting change taking place. You will cease to look on people as "classes" or "groups," and become increasingly aware of people as individuals. You will no longer be subject to the popular delusion that "the radio audience is a composite of fourteen-year-old minds." There is no such thing as "the masses." There is no such thing as a "Southerner." There is no such thing as the "farm population." There are only individuals! When you hear people speak of the "common man," you may be sure that person does not know any common man. The writer eventually learns that this is a world of individuals.

It is true that the more people one knows, the more one is struck by certain common denominators of human nature which occur again and again in all races, in all ages, in all creeds, in all countries. An understanding of these fundamental common denominators is an essential part of the writer's preparation for his work. No good writer makes the mistake of talking about groups of people. A good writer knows that every individual is a law unto himself. But if you can understand one farmer and know him intimately, there is some magic of understanding that makes it possible for you to write about that man in such a way that all farmers will be interested in him and accept him as an authentic member of their occupation. This does not mean, however, that you have reached the point at which you can talk about groups of people; you should in fact never reach that point!

Do not overestimate the capacity of your memory. As you meet people with interesting ideas, or people who you think would make interesting characters, make frequent jottings on cards which you can file. These cards need not be literary masterpieces. They certainly should not be too voluminous. But they should capture in as few words as possible the essence of what you thought was interesting about an individual and what might make him worth putting into a story sometime. Certainly, if you are meeting many people, you will forget them. Therefore, it is not only wise but necessary to keep some kind of index of those you meet. If you do this, you will always have your information at your fingertips.

A "Places" Program

A writer needs to do the same thing about places that he must do about people. He must get acquainted with many localities. But taking an interest in places can be interpreted as broadly or as narrowly as the individual chooses. Many successful writers have chosen to make the world their experimental laboratory; others have been content to fathom the depths of a small town. In either case, the result may be good writing.

The average person avoids new places almost as assiduously as he avoids new people. He tends to go over and over to the places he knows. He goes to the same summer resort for his vacation, he patronizes the same movie house whenever possible, he eats in the same restaurant when he goes out for dinner. Most people like to create a pattern and then live within it. The writer must avoid such a pattern almost as religiously as he avoids a too restricted pattern of acquaintance.

Concerning places, the writer must cultivate a keen sense of observation and a high degree of curiosity. This attitude will result in the collection of much usable material. Investigating places, like making acquaintances, takes time and costs money. One cannot sit down and say, "I should like to go somewhere," and get there on a magic carpet. A program of travel, whether it be afternoon sightseeing trips around the city or year-long tours around the world, does not become an actuality by simply wishing. Few people are financially able to indulge their travel whims. On the other hand, hundreds of people with practically no financial resources at all manage to travel widely by careful planning and by ingenious economy. Whatever time and money are spent on travel are well worth the while if the writer makes the most use of his opportunities. Incidentally, the writer's necessity for traveling and seeing places may become rationalization for indulging in a nomadic existence which many would enjoy, but few can afford. One of the pleasant aspects of writing is that it is a highly portable profession. The writer's office is wherever he happens to be.

This program of travel should be accompanied by a program of reading and research. If you will take the trouble to find out what there is to see and what there is to learn about a place before you visit it, your dividends from the visit will be much greater. If, through reading and investigating, you know what there is to be seen, seeing it will have much more significance. You tend to see what you look for; if you know what you are looking for, your chances of seeing it are infinitely greater.

To what kinds of places should the writer go and for what kinds of things should he look? It may be impractical, but certainly not wrong, to advise the writer to go everywhere and see everything he can. He must look upon all places as potential settings for stories or subjects for writing. However, that answer is general, and like all generalities, somewhat unsatisfactory. What follows gives a few specific suggestions for the beginning writer.

Visit the industries in your locality. Some day you may have to write a story dealing with steel mills or pottery plants or railroad yards or canning factories. If you have visited such places and know in general what goes on in them, your research when you come to a specific assignment will be greatly facilitated. Any metropolitan area offers enough such opportunities to keep a writer busy on week-ends for at least a year.

Go to places of historic interest. These places often provide good story suggestions; some may furnish ready-made material which only needs putting on paper. Such places are important to the writer for another reason. If they are well known, many people will have visited them and be able to recognize them. The more obscure historic spots are often useful because the stories surrounding them may be less well known and therefore furnish fresher material. If the occasion ever arises when you have to include one of them in a story or a script, you will have firsthand information for your description; moreover, you can avoid inaccuracy in detail which many in your audience might detect. Too many people, for instance, have visited Niagara Falls and know what it looks like for you to try to write about it with insufficient background.

Go to places where people gather. Wherever there are crossroads in human traffic, there are stories and ideas for stories. Railroad stations, bus depots, county fairs, movie lobbies — any place that throws large numbers of people together is a happy hunting ground for the writer on the prowl for ideas. One needs only remember such programs as *Grand Hotel* and *Manhattan at Midnight* to realize how this material can be used.

Visit places of geographic interest. Parks, mountains, natural scenic spots — all these have their uses to the writer. Every such place has a "feel" all its own and from many such places the writer can glean ideas that might eventually result in a script.

If you live in a city, look up the foreign settlements. There will be communities of Turks, Mexicans, Swedes, Greeks. In large cities some of these settlements may even support a regular community life. Such neighborhoods, if one can get into them, give the writer a chance to see how other peoples live, what their customs are – their modes of life, their foods, their religions. Through looking into some of these settlements, a writer with a real curiosity can learn much of the rest of the world without going far from home. Again, if you live in a metropolitan area, become familiar with the "districts" of your city. Every city has its financial district, its newspaper district, its industrial district, its theater district. Each of these tends to be a little way of life in itself; each has its own characters, its own flavor, sometimes even its own vocabulary.

An experienced newspaperman, following this procedure, can find out more about a locality in three weeks of concentrated work than many persons who have lived in it all their lives. The young writer will do well to adopt the tactics of these journalists.

One more caution: take time enough to do a good job. Most writers will find it more profitable to know one place well than to know ten places in a sketchy manner. The writer cannot afford to be a traveler who "does" Europe in ten days. Traveling for pleasure is one thing; traveling to find copy in new material, places, and people is something else.

You may wonder how you can afford to take time for such a program as this. As a matter of fact, you must take time. Remember that a writer must be constantly filling his reservoir of information and experience. The fuller that reservoir is filled, the more it will run over into honest creative writing. Many writers have spent their entire lives moving from one community or one part of the world to another. They live a nomad existence, wandering from place to place and finding new material everywhere they go. Somerset Maugham is one of the best examples among our current literary men. He has lived all over the world and written about most of the places where he has lived. And in each case, he has spent enough time in one place to have an honest understanding of that place when he comes to write about it.

FIND A PLACE TO TALK SHOP

Writers seem to act as catalytic agents on other writers. They "spark-plug" each other, and by this reciprocal stimulation all parties seem to profit. Some of the best contacts a young writer can make are those with other writers in his community; these are made, not for friendship, but for the sake of talking shop. Quite aside from the information which the beginner may glean, there is some kind of alchemy at work which inspires the young writer with new ideas and new endeavor.

There are few communities that do not boast writers of some sort. They may not be great novelists or world-renowned playwrights. Remember that the staff of the local newspaper is composed of men who write for a living, and it is axiomatic that every newspaperman in his spare time (or at least in his imagination) is at work on the next great American novel. Even though most of these self-started great works may never come to life, the hopeful author is still thinking of himself in those terms and he is willing to talk shop. As long as a writer is willing to talk about writing, he can be of help to another writer. If you happen to be in a community where there are many successful writers, and this is true of almost all metropolitan areas, you are fortunate. Do your best to seek them out and make their acquaintance.

Writers are as human as anyone else in their wish to talk shop. Like newspapermen and printers and drill-press operators, they love to get together and compare notes. In some localities, writers are banded together in groups that meet regularly. In other communities there are no regular meetings, but they do get together occasionally. Any potential writer would do well to make contact with such a group.

For years in Chicago most of the topflight writers used to meet every Saturday for lunch at Schlogl's Restaurant and talk. Some of the respected names in contemporary American literature were at one time or another members of this group. Ben Hecht, Charles MacArthur, Henry Justin Smith, Carl Sandburg, and Lew Sarett, to name only a few, were there. Any young writer who could have identified himself with this group would have learned much and profited greatly from those luncheons. If the practicing writers in your locality are not already meeting regularly, you may be able to form some kind of luncheon club or informal meeting where you can meet. Contacts of this kind can be made just as on a person-to-person basis. However it is managed, this business of talking shop with other writers is important, and it is well worth the time invested.

All these suggestions have been aimed to help the young writer acquire, as quickly as possible, a large number of experiences, acquaintances, contacts, information, and to enable him to accelerate the process of filling his personal reservoir. Only after this program has been followed for some time will the young writer find himself in the enviable position of having more to write about than he will ever have time to put on paper. The suggestions which have been made here are not theoretical and they are not only to be read. They must be absorbed and carried out. The summation of all these ideas is what we mean when we say that writing is not a profession, but truly a way of life. Only after these practices of day-to-day living have been incorporated into the schedule of the prospective writer will he be assured of a steady and constant flow of raw material that will lend itself to honest creative writing.

CHAPTER 3

A STUDY OF THE ULTIMATE CONSUMER

RADIO WRITING may be called a profession, a business, or merely a job, but in any event it is a job which presumably must net the writer a decent living. If this assumption is true, the writer must please his consumer often enough to keep him buying the product. The writer can please the consumer only if he has an intimate and detailed knowledge of what the consumer audience wants. He should know every pertinent fact about the people who listen to, and ultimately pay for, the radio programs he writes. With the best knowledge and information available, it is still largely a matter of guesswork, with many more *X* factors in the problem than a scientist would accept in an experiment. At best, the whims of public acceptance are variable, subject to many circumstances over which the writer has no control. It therefore behooves him to know as much as possible in order to be able to hit his market.

This may seem to be pandering to the public. Undeniably much pandering goes on in the writing and designing of radio programs. But it means something else to the writer. It means that in studying his audience he is seeking those well-springs of human emotion and experience that make people respond positively to aural stimuli. It is just as impossible to write successfully for an audience that you do not know as it is to write successfully about material with which you are not familiar. You must be intimately and thoroughly familiar with both these factors in the equation.

Not only must you have an intimate knowledge of the ultimate consumer, but you must also have a knowledge of the problems of the "jobber" or the "wholesaler" of your product. After all, a writer is in a position similar to a manufacturer — it is seldom that he delivers direct to the consumer. Your stuff is handled through agents whose job is to distribute it through sale to the ultimate consumer. Therefore, you must know the problems and the interests of the salesmen, both wholesale and retail, who handle your products. Perhaps this makes the whole thing sound far too commercial to suit a creative radio writer. It is meant to sound so. The commercial aspect of radio must be recognized. Even great writing is of no value in radio unless it reaches its audience. Knowledge of the processes by which writing reaches its audience enables you to market your material successfully. If you know the ultimate consumer and the jobber who delivers to him, then you may be able to please both, and accomplish the results for which you are striving.

THE "LISTENER"

What known facts are there which will help us to understand the average radio listener? This question might be approached from several different directions. We can take the statistical approach and quote facts and figures about our audience. We can approach the whole thing subjectively by checking our own listening habits, or we can apply the yardstick of exterior information to our audience and draw certain conclusions from this source. Before we have finished, we shall have done all three.

How many listeners are there?

About the size of our United States radio audience we have certain specific facts. There are 28,838,203 homes in the United States equipped with radio, or 82.8 per cent.[1] We know that there are about eighty million habitual radio listeners. We know that more than 50 per cent of all the radio receiving sets in the world are located in the United States. We know there are many more homes equipped with radios than with telephones. These are matters of statistical fact. While they do not tell all that we should like to know, they do give a fairly accurate idea of the size of our audience. We also know that as high as 83 per cent of the total audience sometimes listens to a single program.[2] This was the listening rating accorded the two speeches by President Roosevelt immediately following the declaration of war on December 7, 1941. These figures include only the American audience, and do not take into account the many Canadians who listen regularly to American stations. Neither do they take into account the audience outside the United States that is reached by short wave.

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[1] The figures that appear here are estimates made by the National Association of Broadcasters' Research Department from the 1940 United States Census of Housing data.

These figures would indicate that approximately two-thirds of the American public are more or less habitual radio listeners. This would include most of the adult population. It is the largest audience that is available to any known medium of communication.

Where are they?

Where are our listeners located and how are they distributed? Again statistical answers are available. Table 1 will give some specific answers to these questions.

These figures indicate the proportion of radio-equipped homes in the indicated areas of the United States; the region in and around New York has the highest percentage; the southeast section has the lowest.

Aside from geographical distribution, there is another breakdown which is significant. We should know what percentage of our audience is metropolitan and what percentage is rural. Figures drawn from the 1940 United States Census of Housing data indicate that in urban areas 91.9 per cent of all homes are equipped with radios. In rural non-farming areas, the saturation is 79 per cent. In rural farming areas it drops to 60.2 per cent. This sharp drop is undoubtedly caused by lack of rural electrification.

What kind of people make up the audience?

In trying to determine the nature of our general radio audience, we must apply every possible yardstick. We must

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[2] A. W. Lehman, "Program Popularity in 1943, *Broadcasting 1944 Year Book,* p. 28. Washington: Broadcasting Publications, Inc., 1944.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF RADIO OWNERSHIP

States	*Percentage of Radio Homes*
Connecticut	95 or more
Massachusetts	
New York	
New Jersey	
Rhode Island	
New Hampshire	90.0 – 94.9
Pennsylvania	
Ohio	
Michigan	
Illinois	
Wisconsin	
Iowa	
Minnesota	
Utah	
Washington	
California	
Maine	85.0 – 89.9
Vermont	
Maryland	
Delaware	
Indiana	
North Dakota	
Montana	
Idaho	
Oregon	
West Virginia	75.0 – 84.9
Missouri	
Kansas	
Nebraska	
South Dakota	
Colorado	
Wyoming	
Nevada	
Virginia	60.0 – 74.9
North Carolina	
Florida	
Kentucky	
Tennessee	
Oklahoma	
Texas	
Arizona	
South Carolina	less than 60.0
Georgia	
Alabama	
Mississippi	
Louisiana	
Arkansas	
New Mexico	

consider their incomes. We must know their education. We must inquire as to their age and sex. And finally, we must determine their occupation. All these matters will contribute to our understanding of the kind of people who make up our radio audience.

Of homes with a yearly income of $10,000 or over, 90 per cent are radio-equipped. In homes with an income between $1000 and $10,000 a year, 88 per cent are radio-equipped. And in homes with an income under $1000 a year, the figure drops to 52 per cent. These figures do not, however, tell the full story. Various surveys seem to indicate that the homes with the highest incomes have the poorest listening audience in terms of the amount of time spent at the radio. Wealthy people listen to the radio less than any other class. People in extremely low-income brackets listen more than the people in the extremely high-income brackets, but not so much as people in the middle-income brackets. In terms of the amount of listening, then, our audience is largely a middle-class, average income audience. People from wealthy homes do not listen to the radio as much as other classes for the obvious reason that they have many other opportunities for entertainment. There are more demands made on their time; their interests spread over a wider area. People in the extremely low-income brackets listen to their radios more than wealthy people, but have fewer radio-equipped homes. Even in low-income homes that are radio-equipped, the amount of listening is less than that of middle-class families because the former have less leisure. From an economic point of view, then, it is safe to say that the listening audience is largely made up of the broad middle class.

From an educational point of view, the same basic facts hold. College graduates listen to radio less than any other group. Grammar-school graduates listen more than college graduates, but less than any other group. High-school graduates listen the most. People with average education — that is to say high-school graduates, as opposed to grammar-school graduates and college graduates — do the most listening.

In terms of age, the audience range begins at approximately five years old. No studies have been made on a broad enough basis to indicate at what particular age level the most listening occurs. Definite listener preferences have been ascertained for various age groups. It has been determined, for example, that young people like sports programs, dance music, fashions, discussions of psychology, as well as all the other popular programs on the air. Older people like news, humor, old songs, talks, interviews with famous people, and serious music. But in terms of the number of people listening in each group, little is known. For all practical purposes, the age spread is almost universal from approximately five years.

In terms of sex we know some fairly definite facts about our audience. We know broadly that the daytime audience is made up largely of women. We know that the evening time is, in general, a listening time for the entire family, minus the younger members. We know that the peak in children's listening comes between four and six o'clock in the afternoon. We know that there is no established time when there is a purely male audience listening. All these matters are fairly axiomatic in radio. There is certain evidence to indicate that the male audience tends to get first choice on evening listening, even though the actual audience is made up of both men and women. The sex difference in the listening audience has been somewhat lessened in recent years by the addition of other radio sets in the family. Whereas ten years ago families usually had only one radio in the home, many now have two and even three or four radios in one household. The influence of this trend is to broaden the base of the evening audience.

In terms of occupational division, the lines seem generally to follow those laid down in the income and education brackets. People in the highly paid professional occupations are the least frequent listeners to radio. People in the lowest-paid laborer divisions of occupations listen more than the professional people, but less than the middle class. And so again, as in the other divisions, the largest and most loyal listening group is made up of people in the middle-class occupations. These statements are made, not on the basis of specific studies, but rather on indications from mail received by various programs. In spite of the fact that the evidence supporting these statements is somewhat inadequate, it is accepted by most broadcasters.

These considerations on the basis of income, education, age, sex, and occupations tend to indicate that the radio audience is for the most part a middle-class audience. The people who make it up are Carl Sandburg's people and William Allen White's people. They are, in short, summed up in the humble, loyal, fumbling, honest, hard-working figure known in America as Mr. John Q. Public.

What do they like?

If anyone could find the specific answer to that question he would be a millionaire in short order. However, there are certain general answers to this basic question. Table 2 will give some idea of audience preference in terms of night-time program types.

TABLE 2. PREFERRED NIGHT-TIME PROGRAM TYPES

Type of Program	*Percentage Rank in Popularity*							
	1942–43		1941–42		1940–41		1939–40	
	Rank	*%*	*Rank*	*%*	*Rank*	*%*	*Rank*	*%*
Drama	1	27.9	1	31.4	1	28.0	2	24.3
Variety	2	19.5	2	22.6	2	21.6	1	26.3
Music	3	17.9	3	20.6	3	19.2	3	20.0
Audience Participation	4	16.8	4	14.5	4	18.9	4	15.9
News	5	16.4	5	10.9	5	12.3	5	10.0
Children's Programs	6	1.5					6	3.5

In terms of content, the audience has come to look upon radio as a source of entertainment, of instruction, of news, of general information, and also as a pleasing background for other activities.

The favorite listening times throw some illumination upon the habits of the audience. Table 3 indicates these, in order of preference for each given time zone.

TABLE 3. PREFERRED LISTENING TIMES

Choice	*Time*	*Choice*	*Time*
First	7 to 9 P.M.	Sixth	5 to 6 P.M.
Second	9 to 10 P.M.	Seventh	11 to 12 P.M.
Third	6 to 7 P.M.	Eighth	10 to 12 A.M.
Fourth	10 to 11 P.M.	Ninth	8 to 10 A.M.
Fifth	12 to 1 P.M.	Tenth	3 to 5 P.M.

In general, Saturday afternoon is fairly low in listeners. Saturday night is the worst night, although all the other nights are good; Sunday is probably the best day. Audiences tend to drop 6 to 8 per cent in the summer time with a steady decrease each year in the amount of audience slope-off during the summer months. This decreasing slope-off is probably due to the increasing use of car radios and portable battery sets.

Information gleaned from many sources indicates that listeners prefer hearing news on the air to reading it. Seventy-five per cent of the listeners do something else while they are listening to radio programs. Seventy-five per cent of them would rather see an event than hear it broadcast, if it were possible.

One common bit of misinformation should be corrected. There is no such thing in radio as the audience with a twelve-year-old mind! That common fallacy has haunted the whole industry from the beginning. To say that the radio audience is of average intelligence is perfectly true. To say that it is an audience with a twelve-year-old mentality is libel. The danger of this statement is that it implies a superior attitude in those who voice it. It implies that radio must talk down to people. It seems to indicate that the radio listener is not mentally capable of dealing with adult problems. All these ideas are, obviously, utter nonsense. Any writer who approaches the radio audience with such a point of view will certainly fail. It is only when one can achieve a wholesome respect for the intelligence and the imagination of the "man in the street" that he has come to intellectual majority.

What are their listening habits?

One of the things we want to know about the listener is his listening habits. For example, how does he select his programs? It is interesting to know that 5.6 per cent of all radio listeners listen to only one station; 76.6 per cent of all radio listeners never hear more than three stations. Most listeners simply tune their radio set to their favorite stations and let it go at that. There is a growing audience that listens on the basis of a predetermined plan. Approximately 30 per cent of the radio listeners now tune into programs which they have either looked up in advance in the papers or have selected as a favorite program from previous listening. This percentage seems to increase slightly each year, indicating that perhaps listeners are becoming more selective in their choices.

Another habit of the listeners is writing fan letters. Fan mail seems to come mostly from people in the lower-income brackets and rural people, probably because people in these two categories have the least chance for social contacts in their normal life and seek a release for their social instincts in this way. We have learned that sad programs draw more mail than comedy programs, although this fact is no indication of audience preference. We have learned that fan mail always represents a biased and extreme point of view. The only people who write fan letters are those who offer bitter condemnation or enthusiastic endorsement. Practically no fan letter represents an unbiased, considered opinion. Fan mail is therefore most useful to the radio station as an index of the prejudices of the radio audience. Aside from the letters elicited in response to a box-top offer, the largest fan mail comes as a protest against some specific broadcast practice. Enough experience has been obtained by broadcasters to make some rough forecast of the size of an audience on the basis of its fan mail.

It is difficult in the extreme to characterize a whole radio audience. Very few programs are designed to play to such a total audience. Although most of the evening network programs which are scheduled between six-thirty and ten-thirty are designed for the total audience, most other programs broadcast during the day are leveled at a specific group. The writer who is given a definite audience to amuse must utilize whatever research facilities are available to find out everything he can about the habits, the intellectual outlook, the prides and prejudices of that particular group.

The Middleman in Radio

You are, as a writer, working for the ultimate consumer audience. However, the ultimate audience does not buy your product directly. You are forced, by the business structure of radio, to deal with a middleman. This middleman is the jobber, the wholesaler, who takes your original product – the radio script – and processes it for delivery to the public. Who, then, are these jobbers who deal directly with the ultimate market?

The largest buyer of radio writing is the advertising agency. The advertising agency's primary interest is to inform the public about a given product in order to create a desire to buy it. To do this it must furnish the public with a program which will arouse wide interest.

The second largest buyer of the radio writer's wares is the network. In the United States there are four major national networks, and numerous regional, state, and local networks, all of which represent a potential market for the radio writer. They must create commercial programs and also many sustaining programs to fill their schedules.

Next in importance is the radio station. Some large stations buy a considerable number of scripts every year. Some local stations buy little or no such material, but depend on other sources for their copy. Between these two extremes there is a fairly profitable market for the radio writer.

The sponsor who wishes to use radio as an advertising medium must also be considered as a possible market for the radio writer's wares. Sponsors who deal largely in radio advertising place most of their work through an advertising agency. There are, however, a few organizations that prefer to handle their programs themselves and deal directly with radio writers for the design and creation of those programs.

Finally, there are a few individuals who are potential markets for the radio writer. An individual who owns a program (which he in turn sells to a sponsor) may hire a writer or buy free-lance material. This is the case with some of the leading comedians, who hire their own writers. Sometimes a prominent political figure will need a radio writer to ghost-write speeches. Occasionally, even, one writer may have so much work that he will hire another writer to help him. All these, except the first, are more or less unusual.

These five general classifications, then, constitute the wholesale markets to which the writer usually sells. In order to sell radio writing, the writer must consider not only what interests the ultimate consumer audience, but also what interests the direct purchaser. Obviously, specific motives vary widely.

They run the gamut from direct sales advertising to a wish to create a certain impression in the mind of the public. One thing they all have in common — they want to sell something to somebody. That thing which they have to sell may be goods, it may be ideas, it may be good will, it may be specific information, it may be only an attitude. But everyone who buys time on a radio station, paying money to another to write programs, does it for a specific purpose. Each has something which he wants to sell to an audience. His motives may be purely altruistic or completely commercial, but whatever the motives, they must certainly be considered by the radio writer.

The brutal fact is that most people who buy the output of a radio writer are not interested in writing as such. They are only interested in radio writing to the extent that it will guarantee them an audience to whom they can appeal for some kind of action. This fact does not necessarily mean that the purchaser of such writing is not interested in its quality. The sponsor of a commercial program may take great pride in his program, but that pride is not the reason he writes a check for it at the first of the month. Sponsors support programs because they sell goods or create good will for the company or product. This fact must be taken into account by the radio writer who wants to see his output reach its ultimate market.

The radio writer must also understand some of the facts of the business of radio. He must understand that radio is a medium which is supported by advertising. As such, it is a medium which is in direct competition with all other media which draw their support from the same source. Newspapers, magazines, outdoor advertising, and novelty companies all exist on advertising appropriations just as does radio. Hence, radio is a direct competitor of these other businesses and a radio writer must consider himself in competition with writers in these other media. This statement does not mean that he must write exclusively for radio. It does mean, however, that when a writer is working for radio, he must be conscious of this competition and control his output accordingly.

He must also realize the facts of competition as they affect his audience. In terms of audience interest, radio is in direct competition with the movies, with magazines, with newspapers, with social events, with the theater. All these make bids for the attention and support of the same audience which listens to and supports radio. The beginning radio writer would do well to study the attractions of these competing groups and learn what he can from them. Many of them do a successful job of distracting his audience from their radios. Only by recognizing these basic facts and acting accordingly can the writer do his best job.

What general conclusions can be drawn from all this information? It is certainly evident that the beginning radio writer must learn early in his career all the available facts about his audience. He must, in addition, make himself familiar with the problems of the people who pay for radio and the people who make it their business to create radio programs. He must know the possibilities and the limitations of the medium in which he works. He must recognize the taboos inherent in his medium and conform to them. He must recognize the fact that an audience will accept ideas in the theater that they will not accept on the radio because of the basic difference in the audience situation. He must, in short, make himself thoroughly familiar with the listening habits and tastes of the people for whom he hopes to write, and the people through whom his writing reaches the ultimate audience.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM TYPES

Thus far we have discussed the business of collecting raw material, and have gained a fairly accurate idea of the audience for which we shall be working. Our next consideration is the kinds of programs which can be written. What are the various types now on the air? We must look over all of them and get some idea of the requirements of each, and of the background necessary to work with it. Having obtained such an over-all idea, we can then begin the trial-and-error process which may lead us eventually to specialization within a given type of program writing.

Very few people are so versatile that they can be successful in all fields of radio writing. The person who may be a genius at writing commercial announcements may be a total loss in the news and special-events department. And someone who may do excellent work in the writing of children's programs may be completely unable to write dramatic shows. It is, therefore, wise for the beginner to try his hand at the various types of programs and get a fairly complete understanding of the requirements and limitations of each. This exploratory process will soon tell the beginner where he can best fit in and where his specialization may eventually lie.

Many of these program types are overlapping. It is quite possible to have a dramatic program which is also a children's program, or a woman's program which turns out to be an audience-participation show. However, there are certain fairly distinguishable lines between program types, and these should be understood and observed by the neophyte. With this background, let us examine the various program types, both as broad categories and as subdivisions within these categories.

Musical Scripts

There are many kinds of programs which fall under this general heading. Between some of these it is a little difficult to draw a distinct line. The divisions made here are arbitrary, but they do indicate, in general, various kinds of writing that a continuity writer may be called upon to do in the general field of musical programs.

Symphonic programs

In symphonic programs the audience is interested primarily in the music. Any writing involved in the program must hew strictly to this line of interest. It must be concerned directly with the music and interrupt it as little as possible. This general statement is true whether the program is a "live" program or a recorded one.

Opera programs

These programs are nearly all "live" programs, since the number of complete operas on recording is comparatively few, and since the audience for opera is somewhat less than that for symphony music. Again, the demands on the continuity writer are entirely those created by the kind of music which makes up the program. Music is the important thing, and any continuity which appears on the program is important only as it footnotes the music.

Salon music programs

Continuity for salon music programs, like the music itself, may be lighter in nature than that required for some of the preceding programs. This is still serious music, and the continuity is accordingly serious. The main interest is the music, for which the continuity serves only as notes.

Popular music programs

Continuity for popular music programs may come in a much wider variety of styles and approaches than that of any of the preceding types. The copy may have its own intrinsic importance in the program, along with the music, instead of being completely subservient to it. There may even be a program idea to be played up along with the music itself, tending to give more importance to the continuity. Popular music places less stringent requirements on the continuity writer and is usually marked by a certain amount of informality and a more intimate contact with the listener than is permissible on most of the preceding program types. Whereas symphony music draws a fairly specialized type of listener, popular music draws a broad and variable audience. Therefore, the approach to continuity for such programs may be proportionately variable. Writers of continuity in this field have a little more leeway in the preparation of their copy than in continuity for more formal music programs.

Dance music programs

Continuity for programs of dance music is usually brief and nearly always informal. Dance music again seems to be slanted toward a specialized audience. Younger people who have a specific interest in the latest dances and dance music tend to be a rather homogeneous group with reasonably common reactions. This is a help to the continuity writer, because it makes his audience fairly specific. The "high-school crowd" is usually exceedingly well informed about current music in this field, and the continuity writer must be equally well informed if he is to provide copy which is acceptable to students who are constantly following the latest dance releases. Whether this continuity is intended for a live orchestra or a recorded program matters only in the mechanics of announcing a recorded show.

Choral music programs

There is nothing distinguishing about this type of program so far as continuity is concerned, and like most of the preceding types the kind of copy and the approach to the program will be largely influenced by the program idea itself and by the group furnishing the music.

Novelty music programs

This catch-all designation indicates a wide variety of programs. Hill-billy music, novelty piano teams, instrumental trios, piano and vocal combinations, song-and-patter teams, and small swing combinations are all units which might furnish novelty music programs. It is clear from the diversity of talent listed that continuity may be varied in a similar way. Each program under this general heading is a law unto itself and the continuity writer must conform to it. There is, however, a general over-all pattern of lightness and inconsequence which pervades most such programs. The continuity will stress comedy and talent more than the music.

Music and continuity programs

This term is used to designate those programs where music and the script idea are combined to bring out a total program unit. Programs of poetry read to a musical accompaniment would fall in this category. The perennial *Moon River* is an example in point. Many programs have been written around the lives of composers, using their music as illustrative and supplementary material. There are other variations on the basic idea of using continuity and music combined to make up a program.

Musical comedy programs

There are few programs on the air which could be classed as radio musical comedies. This is true for the simple reason that good original scores are scarce. Any such programs on the air make use of the already created musical literature available in the field.

The revue program

The revue program varies slightly from the musical comedy program in that the former tends to be more topical, with the music and lyric combinations an integral part of the script. Although the revue is a definite stage type, a few of these programs have been transferred bodily to radio.

TALKS PROGRAMS

The term "talks programs" is generally used to indicate programs without music which depend on talk in some form or other

Speeches

Few speeches are made by professional radio people. Speeches, for the most part, are made by non-radio people who have something to say to a radio audience. Usually these speakers will attempt to write their own speeches and only occasionally will they fall back on the resources of the station's continuity department for this purpose. However, the continuity writer is frequently called upon to edit and help rewrite and polish a speech to be broadcast in local stations, where less experienced speakers may be appearing on the air.

Interviews

Sometimes interviews really are what they appear to be on the air — spontaneous back-and-forth question sessions. More often, however, they are broadcast from a script which both the questioner and the interviewee read. In the latter case, the continuity writer may have to furnish the script.

Sermons

The continuity writer will seldom be called upon to write a sermon. He may have to edit sermons of local ministers who broadcast Sunday services and who wish professional advice on their efforts.

Round-table programs

Like the interview, these are sometimes truly spontaneous, unrehearsed programs in which no script is used. More often, round-table programs are broadcast from a completely written script. In some cases this script will be written by the participants. The station continuity department only edits it. But sometimes the final version of the script is written by the continuity department from the notes and outlines of the participants.

Forum

Forums consist of a moderator, a selected panel of people who speak from prepared material on opposing sides of a subject, and a participating audience. The forum usually opens with the prepared speeches, and is then followed by a discussion in which questions from the floor may be addressed to any member of the panel. Obviously, this latter part of the forum could not be written. The first part — the formal speaking part — is nearly always read from manuscript, but this manuscript is usually prepared by the speakers themselves. There is little work for the continuity writer in this kind of talks program.

AUDIENCE-PARTICIPATION PROGRAMS

The audience-participation program is not particularly a new idea in radio, but it has come into great popularity during the last four or five years. Participation programs have many advantages. They are comparatively inexpensive from a talent point of view. Their inherent interest does not depend on the skill of performers, but rather on the exigencies of the moment. In all programs of this type, the burden of the script is usually not heavy on the continuity writer. In each case, the writer is responsible for a framework for the program, but the burden of the actual content usually lies with the master of ceremonies or a central figure of some sort who must be depended upon to meet specific situations which, in this type of program, can seldom be anticipated. This spontaneity is part of the charm of the program. Because so much of it is unpredictable, much of it cannot be written. There are several types of programs which may be broadly classed in the above category.

Man-in-the-street program

This type of program was extremely popular before World War II. During the war all such programs were cancelled because of the impossibility of controlling completely what goes out over the air under those circumstances. However, it is a good basic type and has all the advantages of ease, informality, freedom from talent problems and similiar "headaches" which characterize other kinds of audience-participation shows.

Informal interview programs

Like the quiz program, there are many variations on this general idea of informal interviews, under the general heading of audience-participation programs. They are differentiated from straight interview programs in that they are planned in advance and depend on drawing people out of the studio audience for interviewing.

There are other variations on the audience-participation idea which do not classify under any of these general headings. Some of them, notably *Information Please* and *Truth or Consequences,* have reached wide popularity.

FEATURE PROGRAMS

Feature programs is a catch-all term which is used to apply to any program type which cannot be classified in the other categories. Exercise programs, cooking schools, household hint programs, and various kinds of demonstration and educational programs, "how-to-do" and "how-to-make" programs, all fall in this general category.

These programs usually cater to a specialized audience with specific interests. They are most often written and produced by people who have special knowledge in these fields. For example, a program of interest to stamp collectors might be created by a well-informed philatelist, who might not only write but also serve as the talent on the program.

VARIETY PROGRAMS

The variety program is a staple item around which most of our evening schedules are built. Because the variety program is designed to interest all members of a family, all ages and both sexes, it has been given the best evening spots and is therefore one of the most familiar of program types. The variety show is radio's nearest counterpart to the vaudeville of twenty-five years ago. It may, and often does, include everything from talking dogs to concert violinists. The only limitation in the variety show is the limitation of radio itself.

In spite of this rather broad outline, there has come to be accepted a certain fairly standard format for this kind of program. The basic elements are popular music and a comedy or gag routine, usually highlighted by the appearance of a guest star. This staple diet, together with specialty acts, makes up the bulk of most variety programs.

Variety is one of the hardest fields for the beginning writer to crack and is, by that token, one of the most lucrative fields in all radio writing. Since nearly all variety programs are based on comedy, and since comedy is the most difficult kind of writing, the writers of variety shows are the highest-paid members of the radio-writing fraternity. Few people can write this kind of comedy. The prices that they demand are correspondingly high. More often than not a whole committee of writers will be assigned to create an important evening variety program.

Children's Programs

Children's programs are designated as a separate program type because of the audience factor. All such programs may fall within any of the categories already named or still to come. But the children's program has certain peculiar characteristics which are conditioned by the type of audience to which it is directed. This necessitates a special study of child psychology and of those factors which govern the tastes of child audiences in order to be able to work effectively to such an audience. The children's program may very well be an audience-participation show, a dramatic program, or a round table — but it is still a children's program by virtue of the audience to which it is directed and the peculiar conditions which that audience imposes on the writer. For these reasons, it is necessary to list children's programs as a separate type. Obviously, children's programs must be broadcast when the audience is available to listen. This is another reason why they are handled as a special program type by the station and program director.

Commercials

Strictly speaking, "commercials" are not a program type.

They are an integral part of all sponsored programs. American audiences have grown up on sponsored programs and are quite aware of the dividing line between these and sustaining programs.

The specific job of writing advertising copy – the sponsor's message – which may become a part of any program, is a specialized writing task, requiring particular skill and specific backgrounds which are not required in other kinds of radio writing. For these reasons, the writing of commercials must be listed as a separate item for the potential radio writer to consider. It is one of the many broad fields in which he may become interested.

News Programs

Since 1938, radio has come into its own as one of the primary news-dispensing media of the country. People who are not any longer willing to live on a day-to-day basis, so far as news is concerned, have become accustomed to the almost hour-by-hour news service which radio is furnishing to a news-hungry, news-jittery world. Because of the immediacy of radio and the ability to cover huge spans of geography, it has become the ideal channel for the dispensing of up-to-the-minute news.

News programs fall into several different categories, all of which have their place and serve their own peculiar functions. This is another one of those large specialized areas of radio writing which tends to become a profession in itself. It is still radio writing and may be one of the fields which the beginning writer should consider when he is measuring the width and depth of his own talent. The writing of news for radio is not treated in this book, however, because the author feels that it is largely journalistic in background and belongs more truly there than in this discussion. However, the kinds of news programs which are commonly aired are listed here for the sake of completeness.

Straight, unedited news

This type of program is the most frequent of the news-program broadcast. Radio is in the unique position of dispensing news with practically no primary news sources at its command. Only the largest networks maintain a staff of domestic and foreign correspondents who furnish them directly with news. The rest of the industry depends entirely on the service of United Press, Associated Press, Trans-Radio, and others, which furnish even the major networks with the bulk of their news. The dispatches are received and read by the announcing staff.

Edited and rewritten news

Some of the larger radio stations and all networks have separate news staffs capable of doing critical editorial work. They make it a practice to take the incoming news from the various sources available and rewrite it for broadcasting. Most radio news writers insist that, for the best results, wire copy should be rewritten and edited. Not only is the news subject to editorial treatment, but it is selected for a specific program. Many news programs are built and edited in the light of news programs which may precede or follow them.

News commentary programs

This type of news program is comparatively recent, growing largely out of the recent war. News commentators are a hybrid form of reporter, editorial writer, editor, and propagandist, the proportion varying with the personality and interest of the commentator himself. As this type of program has become more popular, it has settled down to something of a formula. News commentators report the news first of all, and then comment on it and interpret it in the light of their own particular experiences and background. Radio has made an attempt to bring to the microphone men as commentators who have had firsthand knowledge of the places and people who are making news at the moment.

News analysis programs

This type of news program may not seem to be different from a commentator type of program. It is true that the two are similar. But strictly speaking, the news analysis program makes no attempt at interpretation beyond the actual copy itself. A news analyst simply attempts to point out to the listener the meaning of news by presenting various items in significant juxtaposition. News analysts feel more strictly bound to draw deductions from the actual news presented. News commentators are more nearly parallel to editorial writers who feel free, not only to report the news, but to make their own personal comments on it.

Specialized news programs

In addition to the types of news programs which we have outlined, there are several kinds which are based on specialization of content. There are, for example, many programs of agricultural news; there are sport news programs; programs have been built around financial and market news, women's news, religious news, Hollywood news, and so on. Each of these requires some specialized background of information against which such news is written and edited. In many of these fields training in writing is much less important than a good background in the factual content of the material to be broadcast.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events programs are another basic program type whose creation usually originates within the station staff. In most station organizations, news and special events are lumped together and handled by one department. In this case the continuity for special events programs is written by writers in the news department. In local stations, where there is no separate news department, the writing comes out of general continuity. This special kind of writing, which many writers find very interesting indeed, should be investigated by the beginner. It is the field in which news-trained writers usually turn out the best copy.

Special events programs may be roughly defined as those which occur, usually outside the studio, on an unscheduled basis. That is to say, they are usually one-time programs or programs which occur only during specialized periods. Nearly all football games are covered by special events departments. The covering of such events as the Memorial Day races, the Kentucky Derby, prize fights, dedications, important political speeches, conventions – all these are considered special events, and all of them require some written script.

Dramatic Programs

There are many kinds of dramatic programs on the air. The beginner should be familiar with the different basic types in common use and have some understanding of the techniques and limitations of each type. The terminology which is applied to various dramatic program types is by no means standard and there is no general agreement on what to call specific kinds of programs. The terminology used here is arbitrary and the listing that follows is meant to serve only as a general guide.

The unit play

The unit play or radio drama is one which is complete in each broadcast. That is to say, the plot starts and finishes in each broadcast. Very often a continuing program may be made up of a whole series of unit plays. One of the oldest and best-known examples of so-called unit drama on the air is the *Lux Radio Theater.* The only continuing factor in this program is the name and the framework. Within the framework occurs a complete play each week. This is the commonly accepted definition of the unit play. Because of the difficulty of telling a story in such a short time, most unit plays are at least thirty minutes in length.

The serial play

It is questionable whether the serial play by any other name would smell as sweet. Certainly no other type of radio drama has had so many epithets cast at it. Probably the most common of these is "soap opera." The serial play is to radio what the continued story is to the magazine business. It is exactly what its name indicates — a long story told in a series of episodes which all interconnect in a common plot. One of the oddest phenomena of the daytime serial play is that it seems to have no terminal facilities whatsoever. The most common plan of broadcasting serials is to use five, sometimes three, fifteen-minute programs a week. In some cases a single half-hour program each week is used.

Dramatic narrative

This type of radio drama is becoming more popular all the time because of the flexibility it allows an author in handling certain types of material. Dramatic narrative is exactly what its name indicates — a story told by a combination of narration and dramatization. Its most frequent use is in the handling of expository material or in telling a story which spreads over a long period of time. However, it has a great many uses which will be discussed in the dramatic chapter of this book. A good example is CBS's *Report to the Nation.*

Biographical drama

This type of drama is set off from others by its content rather than by its form. Most often biographical drama is told in the form of dramatic narrative because the material is best suited to this kind of presentation. One of the most consistently brilliant examples of American dramatic radio has been the job on *Cavalcade of America.*

Adaptations

The adaptation, like the biographical drama, earns its separate designation because of the source of material rather than because of the form. An adaptation may be cast into any of the molds previously described. However, it is classed as an adaptation so long as it is a radio presentation of material which originally appeared in another form. Successful radio adaptations have been made of novels, short stories, plays, poems, and even musical comedies. Certain operettas have been given successful broadcast treatment. There is no reason to believe that still other kinds of material may not eventually be adapted for radio.

Dramatized information

This last category of dramatic programs must be included because of certain developments in the documentary program which have occurred during the last few years. Most notable of these is probably the dramatized news presented in *The March of Time.* The Office of War Information also used this form to great advantage during the war to publish a great many facts which the public needed to know in order to cooperate fully in the prosecution of the war. Much can be done in the presentation of otherwise dry material by the simple process of combining several dramatic techniques in the working-out of the presentation.

This rather long and sometimes overlapping division of program types has been presented in an attempt to departmentalize under specific headings the various kinds of programs which make up our daily radio fare. Undoubtedly there are many programs which it would be difficult to pigeonhole. All we can do is to indicate the general categories which have thus far been established. These will, however, serve as a general guide for the beginning radio writer so that he can see within what part of the radio-writing framework he is most likely to do his best work.

Writers should be constantly on the lookout for new forms, for new ways of presenting old material, and for new material which can be presented on the air for the first time. It is true that the medium has certain inherent limitations, but no one for a moment believes that these limitations have been reached. The fact that a particular idea has never been tried out on radio is not necessarily an indication that it might not be acceptable on radio. We must constantly remember that radio, as a medium, is still in the diaper stage of its development. Radio writing offers rewards to the ingenious writer such as few other professions offer these days. Ideas are the writer's commodity. This, more than any other one thing, is what the writer has to sell. The facts of program organization as they now stand should in no way be considered as a fixed framework within which all ideas must fall. On the contrary, new types are constantly being sought and the people who can develop them will have all the encouragement the radio industry can offer.

CHAPTER 5

THE AURAL STYLE OF WRITING

The style of any lines which an author puts on paper must be governed by the nature of the medium by which they are to be communicated to others. If they are to be set in type and read from a printed page, they will conform to one standard; if they are to be spoken by a human voice, they will conform to another. This dichotomy of the field is inherent in the peculiarities of the perceiving sense in each case. Visual stimuli set up one set of responses; aural stimuli set up another. A good style for visual perception and a good style for auditory perception will exhibit basic differences.

Any writer, then, who hopes to succeed in the field of radio must recognize at the outset that there are certain conventions peculiar to this medium of communication which he must observe, for while radio writing, in a sense, belongs to the general school of writing intended for oral delivery, it is subject to special conditions, some of them purely psychological, others technical and mechanical. The author must, therefore, master the "aural style," which simply means writing for the ear and the ear alone. Radio is the only medium of expression which is entirely conditioned by this particular limitation. Delivery on the stage or the public platform is supported by movement, gesture, and facial expression, and in general by the immediacy which the physical presence of the speaker gives as nothing else can. These aids the writer for radio must forego. There are also, as we have suggested, certain technical and mechanical considerations which must be taken into account. It is imperative that beginners in the field recognize all the factors which make radio writing different from any other.

Before we go too far, we must first establish a working definition of good writing in general. Good writing is that writing which has something to say and which says it effectively. The author should have something to say to which people will listen. It need not be great or soul-shaking in its importance, but it should be original, or timely, or entertaining, or informative, or thought-provoking, or some combination of these. And he must say it effectively; it must be well expressed. Writing that conforms to a few simple, time-tried standards has an excellent chance of being effective. What, then, are these standards?

The most important quality of good writing is strong structure. The composition, like good architecture, should spring from a plan artistically conceived and structurally sound. Each sentence, each paragraph, should be essential to the development of the entire work. No matter how pretentious the writing may be, if it is not organized into a structural unit, it can never be called good.

Not only must the whole be a clear unit, but the relation of the parts to each other must be felt. This consecutiveness depends upon proper order and clear transitions. Sentences and paragraphs should flow naturally from one to the other. The construction of sentences must be clear and easy to follow, for it is perfectly possible to be grammatically correct and still be very involved. Relative words and transitions must point up the logical sequence of the development. Proper attention to consecutiveness will prevent obscurity and give a normal easy flow which makes what is said easy to comprehend and easy to remember.

George Bernard Shaw, writing to Ellen Terry, once apologized for the length of his letter, saying he did not have time to write a short one. Like every experienced writer, he knew that it takes infinitely more artistry to do a good short job than a long rambling one. Good writing, then, is marked by conciseness, by a certain incisive directness that gets to the point. It is interesting to note that the Declaration of Independence takes only one page. It is easy to kill a point by writing it to death. It is not easy to be simple, direct, and brief; but conciseness is one of the hall-marks of a good literary style. In radio writing it is of tremendous importance, as the author must work within the close time-limits of an inflexible program schedule, and the scheduled time is measured in terms of seconds, not minutes.

Then there is the matter of diction. Good writing is marked by precision and aptness in word choice. This is achieved by using specific and concrete words. The writer must avoid general terms and work always for the particular word that most precisely fits his idea. It is better to say that the wind "whined and clawed at the corner of the house" than to say that the wind "was blowing." If a word can tell not only what was done but how it was done, so much the better.

In general, short and forceful words are better than long and less emphatic ones. Flowery writing is outmoded. Simplicity is the contemporary test of effective writing. Too often the beginning writer feels that the elaborateness of his expression is a measure of his skill. Quite the reverse is true. The simpler, the more clean-cut, the shorter the terms are, the more effective they will be. The special importance of familiar and simple words in the aural style will be discussed in a later section. The roots of our language are Anglo-Saxon and most Anglo-Saxon words are short, hard, forceful. "Food" is a better word than "viands." "He is dead" is better than "He has passed away." "I want" is better than "I desire." "Give me that book" is more forceful than "I demand that you surrender that volume." "Help me up" is better than "Assist me to arise." "I like you" is better than "I hold you in high esteem." Short words and forceful ones should be used whenever possible, but always the exact word, the right word must be used.

Effective diction — and this is especially true of the aural style — is marked by words with high sound-effect value. The writer should employ onomatopoeia, which is the use of words whose sound suggests their sense. The words "tinkle," "roar," "crunch," "crush," "lull," "soothe," are onomatopoetic words. The poet has always recognized the sound value of words and every good writer should be aware of it. Like any other literary technique onomatopoeia can be overused or badly used. But used with discrimination, it is always effective.

A writer sensitive to words also makes use of those that have high connotative value – suggestive words, which awaken associations and stir the imagination. Good writing is rich in connotation. Words that have not only the exact literal meaning desired, but also a rich connotation, will give to your writing color and life and warmth. To say "His mind quickly comprehended a problem" would convey the meaning intended, but it would be more effective to say "His mind flashed to the heart of the problem." The word "flashed" carries with it a definite connotation and a sharp visual image which not only tells the listener what happened, but also gives him the feeling of its happening.

With these general principles in mind, let us consider in detail a few of the specific differences between literary style and aural style. Some of these have been suggested in the foregoing paragraphs. Literary writing tends to be more formal and more complex in structure, for it reaches the mind through the eye. Any writing which is too complex and involved is bad writing. But certain ideas seem to defy simple statement and literary style may use to advantage a complex grammatical structure. If a reader gets lost in a long sentence, his eye can always flick back to reconstruct what he has missed. This is, of course, impossible for the listener. Writing intended for the eye also makes constant use of visual cues to indicate structure and emphasis. We paragraph copy to mark each stage in the development of the thought and punctuate to clarify sentence construction. We use italics and, more rarely, boldface type to make certain ideas stand out above others. The aural style can count on voice inflection, pauses, and stress. But we have become eye-minded through reading and feel the lack of visual clues.

The literary style can and usually does employ a much larger vocabulary than the aural style. The average person's reading vocabulary is about three times as large as his speaking vocabulary. A reader may recognize or be able to figure out the meaning of many words in print which he would lose completely if he heard them. The reader can also look up words which are strange to him, a recourse hardly available to the listener. If the word is not instantly familiar, he will lose the meaning.

Literary writing is more often slanted to a definite group. Many magazines, for example, cater to a certain reading public and encourage their contributors to adopt a style which will be intelligible to and please that public. In aural communication, such a careful pre-selection of an audience is not possible. Certainly, the radio audience is seldom a specialized one. Because comparatively little listening is based on programs looked up in advance, the audience tends to be heterogeneous. Readers, on the other hand, do select their reading matter. The writer for the medium of print can be reasonably assured of a relatively homogeneous audience by the very process of selection which the reader exercises. Aural writing must be keyed to the receptive ability of its least well-equipped listeners.

Literary writing is affected by the fact that print, in comparison with speech, is both impersonal and abstract. The printed page is a comparatively neutral carrier of information and ideas. But anything delivered orally must inevitably be colored by the personality of the speaker. Since the aural style can seldom be abstract and hold attention, listeners have come to count on the personal and familiar approach.

Radio writing must not only be informal; it must sound spontaneous. This is one of the conventions of the medium of radio. The fact that it is based on an illusion need bother no one – neither the creator of the program nor the listener. Every art depends upon creating illusions to nullify the limitations of its medium of expression; painting, for example, uses perspective to create the illusion of three dimensions. As long as an illusion is willingly accepted, there is no deception. The radio listener likes to assume, and the speaker on the radio tends to encourage the idea, that the speaker is talking directly and extemporaneously to his audience. Nearly everybody knows these days that announcers do not stand up and talk into a microphone *ad lib*. They read from script. The public knows this and accepts it as an intellectual fact. They do not, however, accept it as an emotional reality. They choose to be under the illusion.

The radio writer must, therefore, make written copy sound as much like spontaneous speech as possible. In order to achieve this, he uses all the elementary colloquial constructions and diction at his command. He will use the contractions everywhere current in informal talk – "can't" for "cannot," "won't" for "will not," and so on. He will use words from the listener's speaking vocabulary instead of from his reading vocabulary. He will say, "I want to go to bed," rather than "I wish to retire." Out of the fifteen or twenty thousand words in the reading vocabulary of the average individual, he will confine his vocabulary chiefly to the two or three thousand words in common daily spoken use. He does this not so much because the audience may not understand the words from his reading vocabulary, but rather because those simpler, more familiar words help to create the impression that what comes over the radio is being spoken extemporaneously, and not read from manuscript. The writer will use the idioms of colloquial speech and will avoid the studied kind of literary figure. He will draw freely on the slang of the day wherever that does not violate the spirit of the program. Finally, he will use a loose, easy structure instead of a strict, formalized structure for his sentences. This, as much as anything else, will help to foster the illusion of extemporaneous speaking.

Radio writing must have a frequent change of pace. As has been said before, the span of attention in hearing is short. Because the ear is short-memoried and because it is easily distracted, it is difficult to hold attention without a constant change of pace. This change of pace may be achieved by varying the sentence lengths, by alternating voices of various speakers, by adding sound or music, or by any one of several other means. The important thing is that one pattern of sound is not repeated over and over, and over again. This is one of the basic reasons why a public address on the air does not usually make a very exciting program. There is little variation in the sound stimuli coming out of the loud-speaker. The lack of variety makes the address difficult to listen to. Therefore, the radio writer will do well to change constantly the pace of his style. If it is necessary that one sound or one speaker hold the spotlight for any length of time, the writer must use extra care in varying sentence length and sentence rhythm.

THE BASIC CONCEPTION OF RADIO WRITING: COMPOSITION IN SOUND

The radio writer deals with two things: with the meaning which his language conveys and with sound as such. Language is primarily a system of sound symbols, spoken or written, for the communication of ideas. An author writing for print is using words chiefly as a carrier of ideas. The radio writer does this, too, but he is also writing in sound values – even words themselves are sound effects as well as meaning-carriers. Sound should be understood to mean everything that occurs in the broadcast except the association of ideas with words. It includes music and all the varied "sound effects" (to use the term in its technical application). So the whole field of radio writing can be summed up under these two general headings. There is the association of ideas with corresponding language symbols and the use of sound (whether it be the sound of words or the sound of music or the sound of a rushing tank).

The radio writer should conceive himself as a composer in sound. He is putting on paper a score for a sound symphony which will be translated by the production director into a meaningful pattern of sound and directed to the ears of a listening audience. This concept is basic and must be accepted. So long as the beginning radio writer is thinking of himself only as someone associated with the front end of a typewriter, he has not yet crossed his first bridge. He must learn to think of himself as a composer in sound. Only when this concept is accepted by the beginning writer will he be on the right road in his new profession.

There is a tendency on the part of radio people in general to assume that a writer's job is to put down the words which go into a broadcast. All other factors of that broadcast are considered to be the problems of the announcer or the production director or whoever brings those words and the rest of the program to life. The weakness of this assumption is that it assumes that there will be two creative minds at work on the program. The writer will be working creatively from his conception and the production director who takes the script and adds sound and music to them is also working from a conception which may or may not be the same as the writer's. At best there is a division in working out the original conception. Unfortunately, most programs these days are developed in this way. The writer who first designs the program puts down what is to be said and may go so far as to indicate roughly that sound would be nice here or music might be beautiful there, but he seldom goes beyond that. This means that the person who produces the writer's program must try to ferret out what the basic idea was and then go to work on the creative job of completing the pattern with sound and music which, together with the words, will make a finished program. It is much more sensible to place the entire responsibility in the hands of one creative artist — the writer! This leaves the production director free to interpret and execute the program without the added burden of being a creator as well. It certainly seems that a more artistic unity could be achieved in all the creative process if it be centered in one person.

This responsibility for the complete making of a program, from the first sound that goes on the air to the last that ends the program, is the only means by which this unity of creation is possible. If the writer does the whole job in the beginning, it is not necessary for anyone else to do creative work. It leaves the production director free to carry on the translation of that sound into physical reality.

Few radio writers are so thoroughly conversant with all aspects of their chosen medium as to be able to do this complete job. Most of them are writers converted from other media. They still look on a typewriter as a final means of expression, and it is difficult for them to conceive of the ultimate translation into sound of what they put into the typewriter.

If this concept of writing directly into sound by using typewriter and paper only as a mechanical means of putting down sound symbols could be achieved, the quality of radio writing would improve. The addition of sound to our writing consciousness and the approach to writing as a scoring-in-sound creates the special problems of radio writing. In this area the beginning writer needs the most radical and complete education.

The radio writer's problem divides, then, into two clean-cut categories: (1) the management of language, both in its meaning and in its vocal effect; and (2) the management of other sound in the program. Much has already been said or implied about the handling of language. Before discussing the management and uses of sound, it is advisable to consider some of the special sound characteristics by which listeners are consciously or unconsciously affected. Because sound is so important to the radio writer, he should know the basic facts about its psychological effects. What we have to say in this connection applies to music and technical sound effects as well as to the sounds of speech.

The characteristics of sound which have constant application to the work of radio writing are these:

1. Pitch
2. Volume
3. Quality
4. Duration
5. Distance
6. Juxtaposition
7. Acoustical relationship

The writer should know that, in general, low pitches are pleasing; rising pitches and high pitches are disturbing and irritating up to a point near the limit of human perception; beyond this point they become less irritating and less exciting as they proceed upward. The reason for this slope-off in effect on the high-frequency end of the scale is that the ear is less acutely aware of the extremely high pitches which eventually pass beyond the threshold of hearing and of course cease to have emotional value. Pitch may be exciting, disturbing, or merely irritating as it goes upward, depending on the other characteristics of sound accompanying it.

Audience reactions to volume are, in general, the same. Low volume tends to be soothing, comforting, reassuring. As volumes increase, they become more disturbing and more irritating until they eventually reach the level of actual pain.

The quality of timbre or sound can be measured only by highly technical means and we usually fall back on descriptive terms to indicate it. We may say that a sound is harsh or mellow, strident or soft, exciting or soothing, brassy or liquid, and so on. We may refer to a sound as full, round, and vibrant or as thin, flat, and mechanical. The descriptive word used to suggest the quality of the sound also indicates the listener's probable reaction to it.

Duration refers to the period of time that a sound continues. The duration of a given sound has little meaning as an isolated fact. However, it is the variation in duration and the organization of various time-lengths of sound into recurrent rhythm patterns which makes it possible for us to have timing, pace, and rhythm – all of which are of the utmost importance in radio writing.

The fact that the ear can perceive the distance from which a sound comes is extremely useful in radio. While this perception of distance is valid only within rough limits, within these limits the characteristic ability of the ear to estimate its distance from a sound is an extremely helpful quality in arranging a sound score.

By the juxtaposition of sound we mean having several sounds introduced simultaneously, relying upon the ear's ability to determine the distance of each from the listener and from the other sounds. The ear can, in other words, hear several sounds simultaneously and distinguish differences in quality, distance, direction, volume, and pitch. This ability is of great use to the radio writer.

By acoustical relationships, we mean the changes that are made on sound by various surroundings. The quality of sound is altered by the space enclosing that sound. A given sound will have one quality on an open lawn and quite another at the bottom of a well. In one case, where there is no surrounding enclosure, the quality of the original sound is unaltered; in the other, where a very solid and close enclosure surrounds the sound, an echoing, boomy quality is given the sound of the reverberation by the enclosure. The ear can hear these differences in quality very clearly.

So much for the facts. Now come the questions: How are they used? What do they mean to the radio writer? How can they be put to work? The best way to answer these questions is to take the facts up one at a time and demonstrate specifically their application to radio writing.

Control of pitch

How can the writer control pitch and to what purpose? We said that high pitches are exciting, irritating, disturbing; low pitches are soothing, pleasant, reassuring. Obviously, if the writer wants to reassure his audience, he will want to use low pitches to do it. He may use any of the following methods of controlling pitch, depending on the kind of program being written and the specific circumstances of the script:

1. He can indicate music which will use a predominance of instruments in the desired pitch range.
2. He can describe the voice of the person who should be chosen to read the lines.
3. He can write a stage direction which will indicate how the line is to be read.
4. He can chose words for his continuity or dialogue which will to some extent control pitch.
5. He can write in a sound effect in which the pitch will predominate.

In some cases all of these means may be used at once, or they may be used in any combination to gain the desired effect. Let us try an example. Suppose we are assigned the task of writing the continuity for a ten-o'clock evening music program that is calculated to let the audience down and soothe it into a dreamy, quiet, reminiscent mood. To begin with, we should hardly choose a brass band to furnish the music. We might on the other hand, use violas and 'cellos very effectively. Our announcer should be a man with a smooth, mellow baritone voice, which could be effective even when he reads very quietly. He would be instructed to use a low, quiet voice. Finally, the writer would write lines of which the following might be a sample:

> In the quiet of the evening, long shadows fill the corners of the room; memories drift in like the smoke of an autumn mist. . . . One of these memories comes to us now in song . . . "I'll See You in My Dreams."

Quite aside from any attempt to establish mood through picture or figure of speech, notice how the word-choice makes it easy to use a low pitch. The words "long," "corners," "room," "smoke," "autumn," "one," "comes," "song," all use a vowel and consonant combination that encourages low pitches. It would be hard to read that copy in a tight, high-pitched voice. The word-choice discourages it. Given the same problem, suppose an announcer were given something like this to read:

> Settle back in your chair. Fill up your pipe. Put out the lamp. Look at the fire dance in the grate. You see a face in the fire . . . which is called up by our next song . . . "I'll See You in My Dreams."

This piece of copy is an attempt to capture a mood of reminiscence, but it certainly does not encourage low pitches. The choice of vowels and consonants would make low, smooth reading difficult. Even though the ideas may be appropriate, the word-choice is all wrong if the writer wishes low pitches to predominate. The words "settle," "back," "look," "dance," "grate," all have short vowels followed by consonants that cut them off sharply, and discourage the use of low pitches. By these methods, then, the writer can control pitch.

Control of quality

The writer controls the quality of sound by the same methods that he uses to control pitch. Since we tend to describe the quality of sound in terms which indicate its effect on us it is easy to indicate the quality desired in any given spot. Consider again for a moment the problem posed in the discussion on pitch. We must write a musical program designed to soothe an audience into a restful mood. What kind of sound quality shall we use and how can we get it? It must be pleasant, restful, quiet, melodious. We will, therefore, choose music with these qualities, and instrumentations which can project them. We will choose an announcer or narrator who has a full, rich, melodious voice and instruct him to read his copy in a quiet, pleasant way. The word-choice and sentence structure must make this possible. In the two examples of script quoted, there is a marked difference in the quality of the sounds quite aside from pitch and the ideas expressed. The words "long," "room," "autumn," and "comes" all use a long vowel in conjunction with a consonant that can also be prolonged, which helps create a soft, pleasant quality of sound. But in the other example, "settle," "pipe," "look," and "grate," are all short in quantity. The combination of vowels and consonants used make them abrupt words on which it is difficult to put a soft, melodic quality. They are not soft, melodic words; they are crisp, unmusical prosaic words and the whole passage is affected by their quality.

Duration of sound and the related effect of rhythm are controlled by the same techniques. Timing and rhythm can be controlled by casting and by stage directions. Some actors and announcers have a naturally brisk, lively style of reading, and for a lullaby program such reading would be out of place. It would be much better to use an announcer whose normal speech rhythms were smooth and even. Most announcers are, however, adaptable enough so that a direction for reading the lines is sufficient to guarantee at least a broad adjustment to the desired rhythms.

Finally, the author controls rhythm with the kind of words and sentences he writes. The style of the copy can control the rhythmic flow of the language to a greater extent than it can either pitch or quality, because the natural rhythm of the lines is completely in the control of the writer. Turn back to the two examples quoted above and notice how this matter of rhythm works. The first example flows smoothly. Each phrase can be read easily and smoothly, as a unit, and all the units — five of them — flow together naturally with very little interruption in thought. The second example, on the other hand, is jerky. It stops and starts abruptly with each phrase. There is no smooth connection between phrases. Each comes to a full stop. They are written as commands, which encourages staccato reading. The object was to create a piece of smooth, soothing copy, but that would be impossible with the rhythm of the second example.

Every poet creates rhythm patterns with words. The radio writer seldom dares to use the formalized repetitive patterns of the poet, but he does use rhythm. The patterns may be less obvious and regular than those of verse, but they can be just as effective. This is one element of sound over which the writer has direct control. Choice of words, length of words, combinations of words, and construction of sentences all combine to determine the rhythmic patterns which so strongly affect the audience. If music is used, its rhythm too must be appropriate. Going back to our program assignment, we should have to choose music that had a smooth, regular, recurrent rhythm. We could not lull an audience to rest with a brisk march or a rhumba number.

Many sound effects tend to have an inherent, if irregular, rhythm, and care must be taken to see that sound effects help instead of destroying the rhythmic pattern of a program. We know that long, slow, steady rhythms are reassuring. They tend to be solemn and pompous. Short, staccato, irregular patterns are disturbing, upsetting, exciting. Quick, regular rhythms have a military effect, and so it goes throughout the entire possible range of patterns.

In sound and music the radio writer has at his command two resources of the utmost flexibility for the creation of rhythm. We often accept rhythm patterns from sound or music more readily than from a speaker's lines. The writer must use whatever kind of rhythm will be most acceptable to the audience.

The simpler patterns are likely to be most effective. In general, the more complex a time pattern or rhythm is, the more subtle it is in effect and the less intelligible it becomes to large numbers of people. The more elemental or obvious a pattern, the greater the number of people it will affect, and the more deeply it will affect them. Eugene O'Neill, in his play *The Emperor Jones* made a very obvious, but nevertheless effective, use of rhythm. It remains one of the classics of the theater in that respect. No matter whether it be sound or music or dialogue which is involved, the radio writer must be constantly aware of using time and rhythm to the best possible advantage.

Control of volume

Volume is controlled by the writer largely through directions written in the script. He can, of course, control the volume of technical sound effects and music not only by directions, but by his original choice. Some music has to be loud to be right. The same is true of some sounds. There is no such thing as the quiet sound of a boiler factory. The volume of the announcer's or actor's voice is, of course, chiefly subject to directions in the script. But to a certain extent voice volume is also influenced indirectly by the copy itself.

Since pitch, volume, quality, and duration (or rhythm) are so closely interrelated, it is difficult to illustrate them independently. Having stated the basic factors governing their use, let us examine some samples of script to see exactly how they can be simultaneously put to work. Study the following examples to see exactly how the author has taken every possible advantage of the psychological qualities of sound in the creation of this scene. A pilot is coming in to land from a demonstration flight. His best friend (Bing), also a pilot, his fiancée (Nan), and another girl (Joyce) are watching from the edge of the landing field. Suddenly something goes wrong. The author of this script[1] had the problem of creating quick suspense, building it to a high climax, and then breaking it into quick relief. In order to do this, she has consciously built into the scene an increase in pitch, volume, and tempo, and the quality of the sound is made increasingly harsh and discordant. This is how the scene was written.

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[1] Ruth Brooks, *Give Us This Day.*

SOUND: OF PLANES GETS LOUDER AS THEY ARE LANDING.
BING: See, Joyce – they top over there.
JOYCE: I see. When does Wallie's plane come in?
BING: His is in the next three to – Holy! – !
JOYCE: What's wrong?
BING: Nan, you were right. Something must have happened.
NAN: I told you I saw something fall off when they were way up.
JOYCE (GETTING EXCITED AND NERVOUS): What is it? What's wrong?
BING: I don't know – but his landing gear has come off.
NAN: What can he do?
BING: Bail out. He can't bring that plane in.
JOYCE: Oh no. Nan – I . . .
NAN: Hold on, Joyce, don't let yourself go.
SOUND: PLANE SOUNDS LOUDER.
BING: Why, he's crazy – he's going to try to do it anyway.
NAN: He can't land that way, can he?
BING (TENSE): It's a crack-up for sure! Why doesn't he bail out?
JOYCE: Oh, Nan, I can't stand this! Wallie – please don't try to land.
BING: He's bringing her in now. There's a chance in a million that he can do it.
NAN: He's slowing down.
SOUND: MOTOR CUTS.
BING: He has to.
JOYCE (FRANTICALLY): He's getting so low –
BING: He's going to try to slide it in – a pancake!
NAN: Bing, he's going to . . .
SOUND: LONG SCREECH OF SLIDING PLANE. THEN SUDDEN QUIET.
BING (PAUSE – RELEASES OF HELD BREATH): He did it.

To begin with, there was a natural aid in the sound effect. The noise of a plane coming in to land increases in volume, which is in itself exciting. The pitch also increases as the plane comes closer. Both pitch and volume come to a crashing crescendo as the plane skids to a stop on the runway. The actors' voices will build the tempo, volume, and pitch of the scene just as the sound builds. In fact, the increasing sound forces them to shout over it. Their tension also increases as the crisis comes to a peak. Notice how short and jerky the speeches are, how many of them are incomplete sentences. Toward the end they are little more than quick-moving fragments, mounting in emotional intensity to match the scene. At the end, the sudden silence as the plane skids to a stop will be all the more effective after the climax of sound. One simple line releases the tension of the scene. All of the basic factors of pitch, volume, quality, and rhythm go into the building of this climactic scene.

The listener's ability to perceive distance between himself and the sound source is one of the most useful principles at the radio writer's command. Every artistic medium has its conventions. Radio is no exception. One of the conventions of radio is that the listener is always with the immediate sound source, the microphone. Therefore, if the radio writer wants to tell his audience that a speaker is at some distance from the scene, he can do so by the simple process of backing him away from the microphone. This indication of not only who speaks but at what distance from the center of the scene he speaks is the best means of creating the illusion of a third dimension. By establishing the nearest sound source to a pickup and the one farthest from it, with possible intermediate sources, a radio writer can tell his audience the size of the locale in which the scene is taking place. Unless otherwise indicated in the script, the production director will assume that the sound takes place "on mike." If the writer visualizes the broadcast any other way, he should indicate those lines which are to be faded on or faded off, or which take place at any given distance from the microphone, which is the listeners' center of attention. Just as a composer of music indicates that some instruments are to be loud at a given point and others soft, so the radio writer in his composition of sound pattern may indicate that some sounds are to be near and others distant.

The radio writer can use one sound juxtaposed against another to help tell his story and establish his scene. This principle has its most frequent application in dramatic programs. Suppose a writer wishes to create for his audience a scene at a football game. He might do so by having an actor simulate an announcer working directly at the microphone. Behind this he might place in his script shouts of a crowd, some of them at fairly close range. Still farther away he might call for a band playing. The three sounds, occurring simultaneously in juxtaposition to each other, would be sufficient to create a complete scene. The audience, hearing those simultaneous sounds and perceiving their distance relationships to each other, would recognize the indicated situation. In this case the writer would be using juxtaposition of sound to help establish his locale. There are many other applications of juxtaposition, but this example will serve.

Acoustical relationships have a high expositional value to the radio writer, especially in the establishment of locale. Suppose we are writing a dramatic script and wish to establish the fact that the scene is taking place in a large empty cathedral. The acoustical quality of the place might be approximated by adding a considerable amount of echo to the lines spoken by the characters in the script. The audience would assume from the echo that the scene was taking place in some fairly large, hard-walled enclosure, and a simple statement in the script would be enough to make the audience know that it was a church. This same principle could, of course, be applied to any scene where there would be an abnormal acoustical condition. This factor of acoustics is again something which the writer cannot suggest in his lines, but must control by direction or production notes to the director of the program.

All these matters which concern pitch, volume, quality, duration, distance, juxtaposition, and acoustical relationships should be constantly kept in mind by the writer and any one or any combination of them used whenever possible. It should be recognized that few of these characteristics of sound are found in isolation. Pitch is always accompanied by some sort of volume, quality, and duration. Distance is sometimes important and sometimes not, which is also true of juxtaposition and acoustical relationships. But in any event, it is the total effect of the particular combination of factors that will govern the audience's reaction to the sound pattern.

It has been suggested in the preceding paragraphs that sometimes a writer who understands the psychological effects of the several qualities of sound can use them, not only to indicate setting and express emotional values, but also to advance the action itself – to tell what is happening. There is another sound factor, not itself one of these inherent qualities, but like them owing its effectiveness, in part at least, to unconscious audience reaction, which is of incalculable dramatic value, especially in character delineation. This is the use of characteristic irregularities in the forms of speech, technically known as specialized speech. The radio writer can and must avail himself of these irregular forms.

Specialized speech, briefly, is speech upon which variations have been superimposed by the individual idiom or pronunciation pattern of the speaker. A Texan and a second-generation Austrian may read the same English words spelled the same way on paper. But as they speak, two entirely different sound patterns result. In other words, when the script is translated into sound, there is added to the meaning of the language as set down the particular sound significance of the speaker's utterance. Since pronunciation and intonation are conditioned by language background and social environment, no two people render the language in exactly the same way. And since in radio writing we often need not only to set down what is to be said, but also to indicate the kind of person who says it and the kind of background from which he comes, the matter of specialized speech is of very great importance.

The writing of foreign dialect presents a real problem in specialized speech and should not be tackled by the beginner. He has problems enough without inviting special trouble. But when the writer has mastered the basic principles of radio, he may wish to undertake dialect problems, and it is well to know beforehand something of this difficult job. For regional or dialect speech tends to be a sterile thing in print. Attempting to indicate a foreign accent by semi-phonetic spelling is also a dangerous procedure. In the first place, such spelling is difficult to read and may cause the actor or announcer who reads the lines to make mistakes. In the second place, the writing is a very laborious job and one that does not pay dividends in proportion to the amount of work that goes into it. Almost any actor who is called upon to do a dialect part would rather have a reasonably straight reading of the copy and make his own dialect modifications.

Usually this involves substitutions for certain sounds. There are several sounds in English which do not occur in other languages. A foreign-born person in attempting to approximate these will substitute sounds characteristic of his own language. The writer may indicate these substitutions if he chooses. But another technique which is very effective in giving the feel of foreign speech, without writing the foreign dialect, is to use in English the grammatical structure of the foreign language which is to be indicated. For example, the German language places most verbs at the end of the sentence. And Oriental languages are marked by a certain circumlocutory verbosity. If the typical construction patterns of another language can be incorporated into a line using regular English words, the effect of a foreign dialect will often be achieved; and if the actor can add to this a reasonably accurate suggestion of the foreign idiom, the combination will give a convincing performance. For example, the expression of the same idea by different speakers might be indicated in the script as follows:

French: "Is that not so, M'sieur?"
German: "That is true, no?"
American: "Isn't that right?"

These three renderings, each in a different idiom, but all in English, manage to give some flavor of the different background languages by means of word-choice and word-order alone.

Regional or local speech presents another problem in specialized speech patterns. In this country there is a wide sectional variation in the English of ordinary speech. Some of these regional differences are actual differences in pronunciation. Others are local peculiarities in the stress or value given to certain sounds. In still others the difference is largely a matter of voice quality and intonation. Sometimes the adjustment is very broad, as in the Cockney and Lancashire dialects in England. In other cases, as in Texas speech or Iowa speech, for example, the differences may be quite recognizable, but still hard to describe. To indicate these, the writer may use some slight indication of pronunciation in his spelling of certain words. This, plus directions, may be enough to give the actor a clue to what is wanted. Certainly no attempt should be made either at phonetic spelling or at syllable-by-syllable indication of pronunciation. That is an interpretative job for the production director and his company. These differences in speech should be known and taken into account by the radio writer, but he need not actually indicate all of them in the script.

There is also a characteristic idiom indigenous to most regions. This idiom, usually richly connotative and picturesque, should be known and used by the writer. Obviously, it should not be assumed that every Texan greets his friends by saying, "Howdy, pardner." Circumstances of the individual situation must determine the amount and kind of regional idiom to be used. Nevertheless, there are certain idiomatic deposits in any regional speech which are in fairly wide use and may advantageously be included in the writer's rendering of it. Suggestion of the characteristic idiom is as valuable as is pronunciation in giving the flavor of local speech.

Perhaps some dialogue examples will show how regional speech may be captured. In the first example,[2] a soldier from an upper-class family in Chicago meets a man from Oklahoma. Read the speeches carefully and note how the "feel" of region is achieved.

TOMMY: Mind if I sit down. I want to talk to somebody.

OKLAHOMA: Sure. Pull up. Luke Trimball's my name. Down where I come from people do more talking than anything else. Git pretty good at it.

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[2] Albert Crews, *Troop Train Heading West.*

TOMMY: Where's that?

OKLAHOMA: Oklahoma. Bartlesville.

TOMMY: What kind of people live there?

OKLAHOMA: Oil men and Indians.

TOMMY: Indians?

OKLAHOMA: Sure. The Osage Reservation begins right outside of town. And half of them Indians got oil! Stinkin' rich. Funny. Ain't it?

TOMMY: What do they do when they get money?

OKLAHOMA: They buy hearses! They love 'em.

TOMMY: Do they know enough to take care of their money?

OKLAHOMA: Don't be too harsh on 'em. I got some Indian in me, soldier. I ain't had no temptations of money, but I reckon I could take kear of it, if I did.

TOMMY: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say anything . . .

OKLAHOMA: Don't apologize, stranger. I ain't sorry or ashamed neither. Matter of fact I'm kinda proud of it. Most Indians is nice people.

TOMMY: Tell me something, Oklahoma. What are you doing in the Army?

OKLAHOMA: Well, Mister, I'll tell ya. I got a little farm outside of Bartlesville. They ain't a string on it, and it's pretty good land. But I always had a hunch they was oil under it, and I ain't ever had a chance to find out. And I figger if Hitler gives us a lickin', I might never have a chance to find out. And I've got the dog-gonedest curiosity you ever saw!

Here is another example from the same script in which the boy talks to a Negro who has just been drafted into the Army. Notice how little indication of dialect is used. Word choice, idiom, and manner of speech are used to achieve the effect.

TOMMY: Hi, Soldier. How they goin'?

NEGRO: O.K.

TOMMY: Tommy Wilcox is my name.

NEGRO: Hi ya, boy.

TOMMY: Mind if I sit down? I want to talk.

NEGRO: Save yo' feet, boy. You'll need 'em.

TOMMY: That's no lie. Where do you come from, fella?

NEGRO: Natchez. Das my home.

TOMMY: Natchez. I thought that was just a name in a song.

NEGRO: No, suh! Das a real place. I gits myself the lonesomes jes' thinkin' about it.

TOMMY: What's it like down there?

NEGRO: It's jes' nice. That's all. It's warm, I guess dat's what I miss most.

TOMMY: How'd you come to be in the Army, fellah?

NEGRO: Ah didn't come. I got took! Ol' Uncle Sam he jus' reached down an' tapped me on de shoulder an' say . . . "Come on, boy." An' I come.

TOMMY: Just like that, huh?

NEGRO: Yes, suh! I ain't foolin' wit ol' Uncle Sam. He say, "You come, boy," an' I come!

TOMMY: But why did you come?

NEGRO: I don' know why's why. I don' do no askin' about things like that.

TOMMY: Did anybody ever ask you what America means to you?

NEGRO: Nnnooo. Don't think so. I guess it's jus' a place for Natchez to be in.

Individual speech habits are handled in much the same way. In dramatic writing, these speech mannerisms are important in character drawing. One of the best and most commonly used devices for character differentiation is to work out individual speech patterns appropriate to the various characters. No two people, for example, have the same sentence rhythms or use the same habitual sentence length. And people with a given background will use the vocabulary and the special speech mannerisms characteristic of that background. Everything that the writer has observed in the speech of people he has met can be turned to account in the creation of dramatic character.

The flavor of individual speech can be achieved by word-choice, by distinctive sentence rhythms, and by a characteristic sentence length. Staccato speech is full of short, quick vowels and short words that incorporate them. Conversely, slow, deliberate speech uses longer words and more sonorous, open vowel sounds. Sentences and sentence rhythms will also be longer. Note, for example, how the following passages indicate two quite different characters, even though the speakers are really saying the same thing.

> Perhaps you'd better tell me. I'll find out under any circumstances. You can save time for both of us by telling me now what Mr. Davis did with those papers.
>
> C'mon, kid. Spill it. It won't do you any good to dummy up. I got my sources. Y'better give now before I get sore. Where'd Douglas put them papers?

So far we have been talking for the most part about how sound can be handled in terms of the spoken word; but it must not be forgotten that it is also part of the radio writer's job to indicate the use both of technical "sound effects" and of music in the creation of a total radio program. Many programs consist only of talks, of course, and for them sound effects and music have no importance. In most other scripts, however, one or the other – if not both – has an indispensable place in the total design of the program. The radio writer should know how to handle both and how to make them serve in the achievement of his result.

Let us mark out the field of the sound effect by saying that anything which is not the spoken word of an actor, announcer, or speaker, and which is also not music, may be classified as a sound effect. The word is not limited to those sometimes startling noises introduced by the sound effects department. Technically, a sound effect is any sound occurring in a program which is not classifiable as speech or music. Thus, in an audience-participation program, the laughter elicited from the audience is considered a sound effect. The ringing-up of a cash register in *Information Please* is a sound effect. The cheering of a crowd picked up by a sportcaster broadcasting a football game is also a sound effect. These illustrations show that sound effects are not restricted to dramatic programs, with which they are most often associated. Let us emphasize again that the sound effect is any sound, not classifiable as speech or music, which is introduced into any kind of program.

As we look at all radio programs, the factor of sound falls into two categories. In what is known as a realistic or nondramatic program, managing the sound pattern consists chiefly in deciding which sounds actually being produced on the locale are desirable and should be picked up. They will be natural sounds normally occurring in the broadcast situation. For example, suppose the writer is designing an audience-participation program. Does he want the microphone so arranged that the sounds made by the audience present in the studio will be picked up or not? Does he want the footsteps of contestants coming up to the front to take part in the program to be picked up or not? Does he want the sound created by the mechanics of the program, such as drawing things on blackboards or arranging chairs, to go on the air or not? These are decisions which the writer of the program must make, though in none of these cases is there a problem of creating the sound. The sound is inherent in the situation; the only question is whether it should be picked up and broadcast or should be eliminated by technical means.

The other broad category includes sound effects introduced by the station or studio staff to help create an illusion, and is concerned chiefly with dramatic programs. These effects must be artificially produced to simulate the sounds they represent. In the realistic program, then, the script merely indicates which of the actual sounds present on the scene are to be included; in the dramatic program, it must describe the kind of sound the station is to furnish. But in either case, the writer creating the program is deliberately bringing in the sound effect to serve as an integral part of his total composition. This is the important thing so far as the writer's real job of composing in sound is concerned.

With this broad approach to sound effects in mind, let us consider some of the specific uses of sound — both the natural sounds present on the locale and sound effects produced artificially to create dramatic illusion. Sound may be used advantageously for any one of the following purposes, most of which are self-explanatory:

1. To set a scene or establish a locale.
2. To project action, both real and dramatic.

3. To create mood or atmosphere.
4. To achieve climax, or extend and intensify climax.
5. To establish time.
6. To indicate entrances and exits.
7. To act as theme signature or trademark for a program.
8. To serve as a transition device between scenes.
9. To contribute to a montage effect.

A few of these are exclusively dramatic uses of sound. Most of them, however, have equal application to non-dramatic programs and may be realistic as well as created sounds. When a speech is to be broadcast from a banquet hall, the pickup on the air of the rustle of the audience, the clatter of dishes, the clink of glassware preceding the actual broadcast, help to establish the locale in which the speech is going to take place. If that locale is important and the production director feels that the audience should get the flavor of the meeting, arrangements are made to pick up some of this sound just to help set the scene. On the other hand, in a dramatic program, the sound effects department would produce artificially the same pattern of sound to set a similar scene in a play.

When a boxing match is being broadcast, very often a microphone is strung over the ring so that the actual sound of the blows landing may be heard over the air. This is an example of the projection of real action over the radio. In a dramatic representation, where pickup of sound from an actual event is impossible, the sound effects department fills in the appropriate sound as indicated in the script. Even the "impossible" events of purely imaginary tales — for example, Superman's flight through the air — can be projected by the accompaniment of convincing sound.

During the broadcast of national political conventions, pickups are occasionally broadcast direct from the floor. The shouting, the talk on the floor, the confusion, the bands playing — all these are let into broadcast microphones and sent out over the air to give the radio audience the general mood, the atmosphere, the "feel" of the convention. This is an example of the pickup of actual sound to demonstrate a mood. In a dramatic program also, the writer may wish to create a mood — for example, one of utter loneliness and desolation. A low, level, mournful wind sighing around the corner of the house might do this better than anything else and can be filled in by the use of a recording from the sound effects library.

The broadcast of a football game is a good example of the build-up of climax through sound. A good broadcaster will let us hear the cheers of the crowd which burst out spontaneously as the ball is pushed over the goal line. This natural sound effect, better than anything the broadcaster might say, creates the climax of the touchdown. In the last moment of play, when the gun marks the final climax of the game, the broadcast extends and intensifies that climax by including the crowd's behavior immediately following the end of the game. Here in one broadcast we have both climax and the extension and intensification of climax. Similar examples might be cited from dramatic programs.

The next two uses — establishment of time and indication of exits and entrances — are so familiar as hardly to require illustration. In dramatic programs, the use of a striking clock to establish the time has almost become a convention in radio. The indication of entrances and exits of characters by the use of accompanying sounds — doorbells, the approach of a car or motor-cycle — is also a standard device. These uses of sound have their parallels in non-dramatic broadcasts. One need only remember the running gag used by Bing Crosby on the *Kraft Music Hall* to build up the station break to realize that even in a non-dramatic program sound effects can be used to set time. And when a contestant comes up to a microphone in a quiz program or audience-participation show and the radio listeners hear him approaching, we are in effect using the sound to indicate the entrance of a new personality into the program.

The use of sound as a signature of theme for a program is familiar and universally accepted. This means of trademarking a program has not, however, been fully exploited. Many programs which habitually use music as a program theme might very well get as good or better results by using an identifying sound effect as theme.

The use of sound to make a scene transition has uses in both realistic and dramatic programs. The picking-up of the bell and buzzer between rounds of a prize fight makes a transition from one scene to the next. The use of applause between numbers in a variety show is a conventional effect familiar to every radio listener. The reader can probably recall many other examples of transition devices which the audience accepts just as it accepts the picture-frame stage in the theater.

In what is known as a montage scene, a number of quite disconnected scenes are blended together by a unifying device. Music is sometimes used for this, but often some sound effect serves as the fusing agent which welds together these successive fragmentary scenes to produce an impressionistic effect. For example, suppose you want to tell the audience that revolt is breaking out all over the country. The device of a high-pitched radio code key might be used as a sound effect to knit the scenes together; and between those quick staccato dots and dashes might come in the voices of various announcers with one or two lines each, giving us a fact here, a fact there, a situation here, something breaking out somewhere else. All these reports, coming in quick succession with the sound between them, constitute the montage effect. In such a program as in no other, the sound effect is the indispensable structural factor of the whole scene.

So much for the several uses of sound effects. If the writer conceives the value of this important resource in terms of these specific applications, he will be more likely to exploit its possibilities to the full. There are, however, unforeseen pitfalls for the novice, and perhaps it would be well, before leaving the subject, to add a few cautions about the practical handling of sound effects.

For instance, let us consider the management of background sound. A beginning writer, however already keenly aware of its value, may yet be quite oblivious of the fact that background sound, if it continues unmodified throughout a scene, becomes very annoying. Suppose you are writing a scene which takes place in an automobile. By the very nature of the scene, if the car is running we should expect to hear the motor. The best procedure in such a case is to establish the locale first, using the sound at a normally high volume level. The setting once clearly established, the importance of the sound declines as the scene progresses, and it can be gradually reduced in volume until it is playing at a low level of background. It is still there enough to maintain awareness of the locale, but it is considerably faded down in volume and does not interfere with the action or distract the audience from the central focus of interest. Incidentally, this process very directly parallels what happens in real life when the human ear is exposed to continuous sound. The ear tends to get used to sounds, even fairly loud ones, and ceases to hear them in the foreground of attention. In conformity with this psychological fact, a good radio writer, having introduced a sound to indicate a continuing background effect, will submerge it gradually after the locale has been accepted.

The inexperienced writer may also go astray in the simultaneous use of low- and high-volume sound effects. In his eagerness to project an action by its sound, he may not consider whether, in the circumstances of the scene, the sound would be audible. If the writer is creating a mob scene, he should realize that the scratching of a pencil as a reporter takes notes would be inaudible in the noisy confusion of the mob's behavior. Obviously, then, a quiet-action sound should not be delivered in the midst of high-volume sounds which would drown it.

The necessity of making sure that the listeners will be able to interpret a sound correctly is another essential that is sometimes overlooked. In general, care should be taken in the use of sound to see that it is supported by the lines of dialogue. Do not, for example, use a sound to project physical action unless the intention to act or the possibility of action has already been indicated in the lines. Or, when two people are engaged in spirited conversation, and suddenly one of them slaps the other, and that sound effect is given without any warning, the listeners will not recognize what has happened. They will hear the sound, but will not be able to interpret it. On the other hand, if the lines clearly indicate that the two are quarreling and that physical violence is imminent, the audience will be prepared for the sound and will immediately identify it.

While many sounds are reasonably unmistakable, there are many others which could not possibly be identified without some clue. The rattling of a pan on a stove, for example, is an easily identifiable sound if the scene is in a kitchen, and the audience would not have to be told what was happening. On the other hand, a sound effect to represent falling rain might or might not be correctly interpreted by the audience without reinforcement from the lines. This particular sound is very similar to certain interference in bad radios or to atmospheric disturbances which may interrupt a broadcast, and the writer must be aware of this. Any sound, then, which is not easy to identify, or for which the audience might be unprepared, should have line reinforcement.

Just a few words should be said about the actual writing of sound cues in the radio script. First of all, don't waste literary efforts on the sound effects or production departments. A sound cue is purely functional and need not be "literary." It should describe in as exact and concise terms as possible the sound effects desired. In general, sound cues should be written in terms of actual sound. Of course, for a realistic broadcast the writer has only to indicate which of the sounds present in the broadcast situation are to be picked up and relayed to the audience. But for a dramatic program, his cues should describe the effects desired in sound terms — that is, in terms of pitch, volume, quality, duration, distance, and acoustical relationship. And they should be specific.

For example, it is a bad practice to use the word "denote" in a sound cue. Do not ask the sound department to give you "a sound which will denote the passage of time." Ask for a specific sound which you think will serve. The word "denote" simply says that you don't know what to do here and are asking someone else to create that part of your program for you. This kind of side-stepping of creative responsibility is bad. And since the sound must be explicitly indicated, the cue, though concisely expressed, must not be too niggardly. A cue saying only "footsteps" is hardly enough. We want to know what kind of footsteps — hurried or slow or walking at a normal pace; walking on what kind of surface and in what kind of shoes; footsteps of a man or a woman, of one person or many. These things and others have to be known to the sound-effects man before he can execute the simple direction "footsteps" so as to convey accurately what you have in mind. "The closing of a door" does not tell a sound-effects man much. If he has a well-stocked department, he may have fifteen different kinds of doors, each with a different quality and different sound. Do you want the closing of a closet door, a screen door, a car door, or a vault door? Be specific.

Sound, valuable as it is, should never be included in a script just for the sake of having it there. Unless it performs some specific function, it should be excluded. A sound effect has no value unless it accomplishes either a dramatic or an expositional purpose. But while it is quite possible to overuse sound, most beginning writers do not avail themselves of it enough. They may use some of the hackneyed, stereotyped effects which occur again and again, but they will overlook good possibilities which may not be so well known, but which are infinitely more effective. There are literally thousands of sounds at the command of the radio writer, and a continuous awareness of their availablity will contribute much to his success. The whole field of sound is so vastly important that any amount of time spent in its study will not be wasted.

We have now considered at some length two of the three sound factors which the writer has at his disposal in planning his program as a composition in sound: (1) the vocal effects of the spoken lines, and (2) technical sound effects, whether natural or mechanically produced. The third great resource, the reader will recall, is music. Its possibilities have not hitherto been developed very extensively by radio writers, partly because the satisfactory exploitation of music requires more understanding of it than many radio writers possess.

It is understood, of course, that there are many fine programs of music on the air, programs designed and executed by accomplished musicians. About 50 per cent of all radio time is devoted to such programs. The use of music by the script writer is something quite apart from these exclusively musical broadcasts. At present the amount of writer-inspired music is not impressive, but there are brilliant exceptions, and more and more writers are studying music and availing themselves of its possibilities. Within the last two or three years there has been an increasing amount of music conceived by the writer and designed by him for incorporation into the fabric of his program.

There are six principal uses of music in the script writer's total program. The reader will note the correspondence of some of these to the uses of sound effects.

1. To serve as theme, trademark or signature.
2. To make the transition between scenes or between sections of a program.
3. To serve as a sound effect.
4. To serve for accentuation or as pay-off.
5. To provide comedy.
6. To serve as background.

We have said that exclusively musical broadcasts absorb roughly 50 per cent of the time on the air. At least half of the remaining programs use music as a theme, or introduction and conclusion for the program. Too many writers begin their scripts by simply writing in "theme music" and letting it go at that. If the radio writer is to be a composer in sound, he cannot dismiss so important a part of his sound composition by simply indicating "theme." The kind of theme that is used, the quality, the length, the instrumentation and execution of it, are all matters of importance to the radio writer. It can, of course, be argued that these are musical matters and belong rightfully in the music department of the station. But if the radio writer fulfills his complete function, he should have very clear ideas about any music used in his program. Obviously, he should have a sound musical background himself. He need not be a technical musician, but should know at least the effect he wants from the theme music.

Theme music should set the general mood of the program to follow. It should be easily identifiable and preferably easy to hum or sing. It should be distinctive enough to be remembered and immediately identified with the program it introduces. Its instrumentation and arrangement should be suitable for the budget available, and the quality should be such as adequately to introduce and set the mood for the program to which it is attached. Theme music should do all these things if it is to fulfill its purpose.

Transition music ideally should perform three functions. First of all, it should separate the scenes or portions of the broadcast. Secondly, it should resolve the mood or emotional key of the scene it follows. Thirdly, it should set the mood or atmosphere for the scene it precedes. Whether the transition music comes between two sections of the quiz programs, between two comedians on a variety bill, or between two scenes in a dramatic show, it still should conform to that general pattern. In some cases it may have to serve only one of the last two functions. Transition music might pick up the end of a scene and resolve it into a definitely concluding piece of music. Then the scene which follows might open cold without any musical introduction at all. An even rarer instance might be one in which the scene ends without any musical help, and then music is introduced to establish a mood for a new scene. More often than not, however, it must fulfill all three functions.

Suppose music is being used as a transitional device in a variety show. The spot preceding the music is filled by a comedy gag routine building up to a hilarious climax and what follows is to be a serious appeal by the announcer concerning a war-bond drive. Obviously, the music in such a case would pick up the key of the tag line of the comedy routine and build it up to the climax which would be high and loud and suitable to the uproarious mood created by the comedy routine. Then by skillful transition the music must carry the audience down to a quiet, serious, thoughtful mood and end so that the announcer can give his serious announcement. In this case the music would have to perform all three of the functions normally assigned to it. In this same instance, however, it might be decided to use music to end the comedy scene alone and bring it to a crashing climax and then a cut. After a suitable pause, which serves as a sobering influence on the audience, the announcer could come in with his announcement. Either application of music might be effective.

Music is seldom used as a realistic sound effect, except as a dramatic scene might call for an orchestra playing in the background or something of the sort. Then, technically, the music would be fulfilling the function of sound. In a non-realistic program music is quite often used as a sound effect. Suppose we are writing a pseudo-scientific script in which some inventor was getting ready to take off on a rocket trip to the moon. The launching of the rocket and the take-off into the upper stratosphere would be a difficult assignment for the sound department, although not an impossible one. Because it is essentially an unrealistic effect, however, it might very well be assigned to music, so that the audience, instead of feeling that they were actually hearing the sound of a rocket ship taking off, would experience musically the effect of the same thing. The latter treatment would probably be more artistic. Such sound-effect assignments are frequently given to music.

The use of music for the accentuation at the end of a scene or for the tie-off of a particular section of a broadcast is so frequent and familiar that it does not need discussion. It is a standard technique for variety programs and other kinds of programs where a division point in the broadcast is desired. The use of music as a comedy device is also familiar. Some orchestras become expert at musical horseplay and create many amusing effects.

One of the most exciting applications of music in radio is its use as a background for other broadcast material. Recordings are sometimes used to back poetry readings. Some dramatic programs are almost completely scored for music, which supports most of the dialogue and narration in addition to serving for transitional effects and other routine purposes. This skillful interweaving of music with drama is obviously expensive and is available for the most part only to the networks, but it is perhaps the most challenging and exciting use of music in broadcasting. It is not a new device: it is as old as drama itself; but in its recent development it has attained a very high level of artistic perfection. Background music is definitely designed for a secondary level of attention with something else occupying the primary attention area. It is being used to underline and highlight the emotional content of whatever is being broadcast over it and also, in many cases, to induce unconscious emotional reactions in the audience. This use of music demands very skillful planning and execution, but when it is handled well, it is extremely effective.

Much that can be said about the use of music will not help the writer unless he already has some fairly accurate "feel" for musical values. The best possible advice to the novice is to secure access to an excellent library of recordings and begin to listen constantly to music. Such listening will inevitably develop in him an increasing awareness of the possibilities of music. It may even, eventually, give him an idea for a complete script.

This chapter began with a consideration of some of the special conditions of radio communication to which the author's style and technique must conform, and throughout the discussion of the varied phases of a script writer's total job these limitations of his medium have been uppermost in our minds. But every art, every mode of expression, has the advantages as well as the limitations of its material conditions, and is peculiarly qualified by the nature of its medium to express certain aspects of reality. What are the special advantages of radio? For rendering what kinds of program material is it an especially valid instrument? The key to the answer is in the conception, already insisted upon, of radio writing as a composition in sound. The special characteristics of auditory perception make radio, with its rich resources of sound, the most effective medium of expression for some kinds of writing.

Because of the immediate and highly imaginative response to aural stimuli, impressionistic and expressionistic writing is most acceptable on the radio. The ear is infinitely ready to "make-believe" and the whole field of fantasy is open to the radio writer. Another consideration is that people respond more emotionally to stimuli perceived through the sense of hearing than to those coming through other channels. This gives the radio author a direct approach to the hearts of the listening audience; if his work is well done, he will be rewarded by an immediate and powerful emotional response. And because the ear is fond of regular time and stress patterns, radio is perhaps the ideal medium for poetry, with its movement and rhythm and the sound values of its diction. In the interpretation of these aural values of poetry, the absence of any distracting visual terms is an advantage.

The conviction that radio has a special field in which it can be more effective than other media, that for rendering certain emotional or dramatic values it is uniquely adapted, should be the efficient drive behind the radio author's best work. This field of special opportunity is not yet fully exploited or even well defined. The challenge to develop and extend it should be a stirring one to an imaginative and sensitive writer.

To qualify for taking up this challenge, the script writer must develop all his techniques, not as separate skills, but as factors in a single complex but unified activity. He must be conscious of responsibility for the total job, as the composer of a symphony is responsible for the contribution of each instrument and for the integration of the several parts as related factors in the final effect. Ideally everything which comes out of the loud-speaker in the final broadcast should have been conceived and set down on paper by the author himself. It is an ideal which few have approached. But only if he subscribes to this ideal will a writer exploit to the full his own possibilities and the possibilities of his chosen field.

CHAPTER 6

THE MECHANICS OF RADIO WRITING

RADIO WRITING has its own set of mechanics. Most of the mechanics are dictated by the requirements of production. Specifications will be set down for the format of a radio script and these should be followed religiously by the beginning writer. They are the first signs of a professional approach to work. Each of the specifications is important in the machinery of production. The rules which are set forth here for the form of radio writing make the whole process of production infinitely easier and more accurate. The writer may rightly ask, "What does this have to do with creative writing?" The answer is — nothing whatsoever. However, since a radio script is only a sound score on paper, it should be so designed as to allow for the maximum efficiency in translating that score into actual sound.

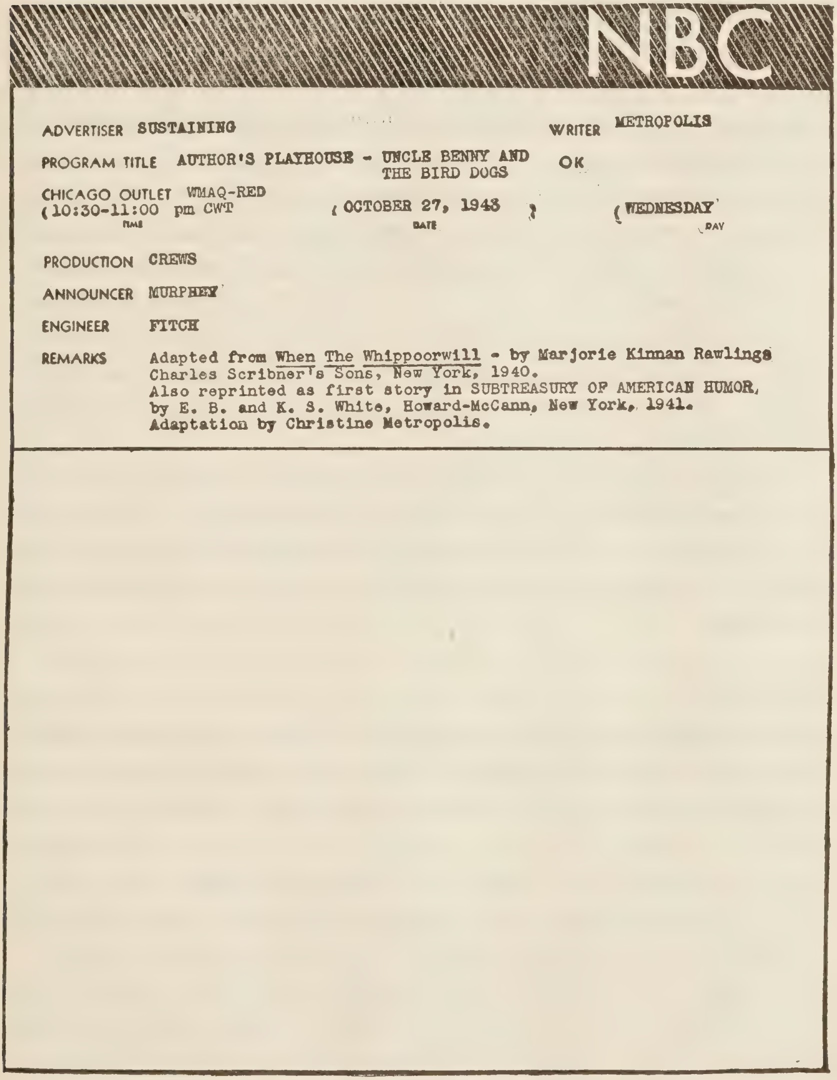
THE FORMAT

It should be understood that there is no such thing as a standard form for a radio script. Every station has its own peculiar set of specifications. They differ somewhat from station to station and from network to network. Even between various offices of the same network there may be some variations in script form. The form recommended here, however, has been found to be completely satisfactory, and meets most of the requirements of easy, accurate production. It may be varied as the specific case warrants, but, in general, this set of specifications will be found concise and workable.

The title page

Most stations have a printed form for the title pages they use in their scripts. The beginning writer would do well to include as much of the material called for on the form pages as he can. Title pages usually show the following information:

1. The advertiser
2. The author
3. The program title
4. The outlet (the station over which it is broadcast)



NBC

ADVERTISER SUSTAINING WRITER METROPOLIS

PROGRAM TITLE AUTHOR'S PLAYHOUSE - UNCLE BENNY AND THE BIRD DOGS OK

CHICAGO OUTLET WMAQ-RED

(10:30-11:00 pm CWT (OCTOBER 27, 1943) (WEDNESDAY)

TIME DATE DAY

PRODUCTION CREWS

ANNOUNCER MURPHEY

ENGINEER FITCH

REMARKS Adapted from When The Whippoorwill - by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1940.
Also reprinted as first story in SUBTREASURY OF AMERICAN HUMOR,
by E. B. and K. S. White, Howard-McCann, New York, 1941.
Adaptation by Christine Metropolis.

5. The time of the broadcast
6. The date of the broadcast
7. The day
8. The production director
9. The announcer
10. The engineer
11. Remarks

Optional information on the title page may include the cast of characters, with the names of the actors who are assigned to the parts. Some stations also list the sound effects called for on the title page. Under "Advertiser" the name of the sponsor appears, if it is a commercial show. If the show is sustaining, the word "sustaining" usually appears after the word "Advertiser." Such a title page shows all pertinent information about that particular script. It furnishes the members of the company with a complete reference to other members, so that everybody knows who is assigned to the program and what job he is doing. It also serves as a permanent record in the file of that particular program.

It is obvious that if a writer is free-lancing, there is much of this he cannot fill in. If he is simply submitting a program, it may be sufficient to show on his title page the advertiser to whom it is submitted, the name of the script, and the name of the author.

Inside pages

Each inside page of the script should show the name of the script, the name of the series, if it is one script in a series, and the page number at the top of each page. Actors and announcers should never use a script that is clipped together. There is too much chance of rattling paper when the page is turned. Being unclipped, the pages of the script can easily get out of order or even be mixed with someone else's script. If each page of the script has its number and the name of the script on it, there will be little danger of that script getting mixed up, or if it does, it will be very easy to reassemble it.

It is fairly general practice to type in capital letters everything which is *not* to be said on the air. Everything which *is* to be said over the air, is typed in lowercase letters. This is done so that actors can quickly see, in their reading of the script, which are stage directions and which are lines to be read. Their eyes skip over the stage directions, sound and music cues, and jump directly to the lines which they are to read. If these lines are in a different style type – that is, lowercase – from the stage directions and sound and music cues, they are obviously easier to locate and read. There is less likelihood that the announcer will solemnly read, "Door opens and closes," in the middle of an announcement. Sound cues, music cues, the names of the cast members, directions for reading lines – all these items should be typed in caps, and only the lines which are actually to be spoken over the air typed in lowercase.

Common practice dictates that the names of speakers or characters be placed in the left-hand margin. On that same line farther in on the page will come the beginning speech of that character. Every time a new character speaks, his name should appear in the margin in capital letters. Every individual sound cue and music cue should also appear in the left-hand margin and should be labeled SOUND or MUSIC, as the case may be. Then, in the body of the copy, in capital letters, a description of the sound or music can be placed.

Where stage directions occur in the middle of a speech, they should be enclosed in parentheses and typed in capital letters. This is done to prevent an actor from reading a stage direction or an interpretative direction. Everything that can be done in the format of the script to prevent reading mistakes should be done.

All copy should be double-spaced. Single-spaced copy is difficult to read and triple-spaced copy is uneconomical.

Every line of each page in the script should be numbered, a new set of numbers beginning at the top of each page. This facilitates reference by the director to specific places in the script when he is working with his company. When he wants to refer to a certain place in the script, he merely says to them, "Turn to page six, line fourteen," and everybody in the company knows exactly where it is and can find it almost instantly. The sample page of script reproduced on page 289 illustrates these directions.

There is another common reference system which consists of numbering each new item in the script. If the script opens with music, the music cue is labeled Cue No. 1. If that is followed by an announcer announcing the title of a program, that becomes Cue No. 2. If that is followed by scene-set music, that becomes Cue No. 3. And then a new number is assigned to each new item in the script, whether it be a new character speaking, a sound cue, or a music cue. This form is less desirable than the first one for two reasons. First of all, a speech may be several lines long and the cue number refers only to the first line. The other difficulty about consecutive numbering of cues is that it makes rewrite very difficult. If any change in the script occurs, it will change the number of the cues and may lead to confusion. However, if each line of each page is numbered, and a new set of line numbers is used on each page, additions can be made very easily without causing confusion. Every line of every speech has its particular reference so that it can be located quickly.

The Material of Writing

Many writers develop such eccentric notions about the production of their work that no really down-to-earth, straightforward approach to the equipment for writing has ever been agreed on. What is said here about equipment is meant only as a guide along the right road. It seems, however, that if an individual decides to make an honest try at the business, he should invest a certain amount of time and money in assembling the proper materials to do the job. No one would think of trying to learn drafting without having some of the essential drafting tools — a T-square, for example, and a couple of triangles.

First on every writer's list of materials is a good typewriter.

If you do not know how to type, learn! There is no excuse for the wasteful process of writing everything out in longhand and then hiring someone to type it for you. Learning to type is a simple, mechanical job. The writer need not take a course in touch-system typing, although this would be a distinct advantage. But anybody can learn, very quickly, to "hunt and punch" sufficiently to do a fairly accurate job of composing on the typewriter.

The typewriter should be kept in good repair at all times. First of all, it will last longer if properly serviced. Secondly, copy cannot possibly look clean and neat if there is something wrong with the typewriter. If the space bar jumps or if the ribbon jams in the carriage or any of the other things happen to which typewriters are addicted, it should be adjusted at once. It will have to be done sometime and you might as well keep your copy clean as you go. Get used to having good tools and taking care of them. Next, keep a fresh ribbon in your typewriter all the time. Buy ribbons by the box instead of one at a time. The cost is less, and you will always have one on hand when you want to change. And don't be too hesitant about changing a ribbon. It is easy over a period of weeks or days to watch a ribbon go from intense black to a dull gray that is difficult to read. The change is so gradual that you are not aware of it as you would be if you suddenly came upon the grayed-out copy. You would notice then how difficult it is to read. As a matter of professional pride, keep fresh ribbons in your typewriter all the time and make your copy black.

The professional writer should have the right kind of paper on hand for his job and plenty of it. The best procedure is to buy paper in fairly large quantities in regular ream stock and have a printer cut it up to proper shape and wrap it in packages of five hundred. The best kind of paper for radio script is twenty- or twenty-four-pound sulphide stock. If you want to be efficient and save yourself time, it is a good idea to type a sample script page on your own typewriter as illustrated on page 101. Then take the sample either to a mimeographer or a printer and have your script paper printed with the line numbers on it. If these are printed in some color other than the black of the typewriter ribbon, they tend to stand out from the script and are less likely to be confused with the actual copy itself. This process is inexpensive and does give the script paper (and therefore your finished script) a professional look. Most people prefer to put even their carbons on regular script paper. It gives a neater appearance and keeps all the copies of your script uniform.

The next item on your list is an adequate supply of good carbon paper. The better the grade of carbon you buy, the less likely it is to smudge and smear on the copies. Again you save money by buying in quantities. Instead of buying a small package, buy a box of a hundred or two hundred carbon sheets. As soon as carbons begin to dim, replace them. Even your second sheet should always be clear and sharp, and this is possible only if you use fresh carbon. About simple things like paper and office supplies the writer should be generous. The neat professional appearance of scripts pays dividends later on.

You will need a supply of heavy manila mailing envelopes. These can be had at any stationer's or printing shop and do not involve a large investment. Again, if you wish to do the job professionally, you can either have gummed labels printed with your own return address or have a return address printed on the envelope itself. Of the two, the gummed label is probably the simpler solution because it is easier to change in case of a change of address. Nine by twelve envelopes are the best size for script mailing. They should have a metal clasp and also a gummed flap because scripts must be mailed first-class.

The next item in the writer's list of materials is an adequate supply of postage. If you are doing a considerable amount of marketing of free-lance material, you will be sending scripts out all the time. Each script may cost you from fifteen to forty-five cents, depending on the weight of your paper, the number of copies you send, and the size of your script. To avoid pasting two- or three-cent stamps all over an envelope, keep in your postage drawer a good supply of stamps of larger denominations. Again, this gives a neater, more professional appearance. While it is not necessary, a postal scale will save taking each individual manuscript to the postoffice for weighing. It eliminates the loss of time incurred if the script has insufficient postage or the loss of money from having too much. In terms of time and money saved, it will soon pay for itself.

A good stapler is an essential when you are working with scripts. When you send manuscripts in for sale, there is some risk that your script will be lost or scrambled if you use only paper clips to keep it together. A stapler is neat and inexpensive and it is the simplest possible way of binding the script together, either for mailing or for filing.

Reference Material

Every writer who is serious about his job will find himself in need of all sorts of reference material. Some of this is inexpensive and easy to obtain. Other items are fairly expensive and have to be collected. But it is material which the writer should acquire for himself as soon as possible. It is as essential to his work as a law library is to an attorney.

Trade journals are almost a "must" for the practicing writer. To the person interested in radio writing, the outstanding magazines in the field should be subscribed for and read regularly. *Broadcasting Magazine, Radio Daily, Variety, Advertising Age* — these and others are valuable adjuncts to the writer's library and a necessary reference for his work. Not only should they be on hand, but the supplementary publications of these trade journals should also be at hand. *Broadcasting Magazine* puts out a yearbook number which is full of valuable information. So does *Radio Daily*. Other magazines in the trade field issue either special anniversary numbers or regular yearbooks which contain a gold mine of information for the worker in radio. These are basic tools which the writer should not deny himself. They are not a luxury; they are an ordinary part of his writing equipment.

Any writer will find his work greatly facilitated if he has at hand a simple basic reference library. Radio writing is not a matter of making up a script solely from imagination. Unfortunately, no matter how imaginative a script may be, it crosses the lines of reality somewhere, and it almost inevitably involves the inclusion of some kind of specialized knowledge which the writer may or may not have. No radio writer can be expected to be a walking encyclopedia. But, since he must use widely varied material, he must have easy access to a large library. Any well-equipped library will have the items mentioned here, but if the writer can have personal copies at his immediate disposal, it will be much simpler.

A basic reference library for any writer should include these items:

1. A dictionary, preferably unabridged
2. A fairly voluminous encyclopedia
3. An almanac
4. An atlas with maps showing fairly large-scale details of all parts of the world
5. A thesaurus
6. A book of quotations or quotation references
7. A radio yearbook
8. A set of music catalogues (copies of these can be had from any good record shop)

This is a very slim list indeed. If the writer wishes to enlarge his library, he will need a fairly complete historical reference work, such as *An Encyclopedia of World History*, edited by W. L. Langer — historical characters and historical facts have a way of cropping up in scripts time and time again. *Or* a series of books covering the major movements of world history would be of great help in this respect. Several good geographies are very useful; very often the physical geography of a region may influence the writer's handling of a set of lines or a scene in a play or a detail in the script. A copy of *Who's Who* is useful.

From here on the library can become more general and should contain some books in the areas of the various arts and sciences. Biographies are always helpful. Fiction is probably the least helpful of all, except for certain classics which may be important for reference. A large library is useful and helpful, but it is not necessary.

Contact should be made with a good general library and acquaintance made with some of the librarians. Inevitably, no matter what kind of writing you choose to do, you will find you have to do a certain amount of research.

Two other items of equipment are very useful to the radio writer. If he is turning out much volume, he will soon discover that he has a good many scripts which he has to keep track of in some way. The easiest and simplest way to manage this is to buy a regular nine-by-twelve filing case in which the scripts can be kept neatly and where they are easily accessible. Even secondhand cases are sometimes available.

The writer will also find it extremely handy to have a three-by-five or a five-by-eight card file. A card filing system is one of the most convenient means of keeping track of program ideas, or ideas for characters, plot situations, newspaper clippings which have script possibilities, and all the hundred and one other things which an active writer wants to keep on file. It also has many other uses, but this one alone would justify its purchase. Remember, the collecting of material is one of the most important jobs a writer has; and the collection of material is useless unless it can be filed and made available in an easily accessible form.

Any person planning to write professionally should learn to compose on the typewriter. Many beginning writers become temperamental and say that they cannot so compose. They have to write everything in longhand and type it later. This is utter nonsense. It is true that a great many well-known writers have turned out all their stuff in longhand. This does not disprove the fact that it is a wasteful process, nor does it prove that an individual cannot learn to compose on the typewriter. It can be done.

Every final draft should be made with at least two and preferably three carbons — four copies altogether. Paper is cheap and an author's time is valuable. There are several reasons why carbon copies should be made. In the first place, even with careful handling, scripts are sometimes lost. If a carbon copy is available, no harm is done. If there is only one copy available and it is lost, the damage may be irreparable. Even if the script can be reconstructed, the amount of work involved is equal almost to the original effort. No writer should ever let a script out of his hand unless he has a carbon copy in his file. In the second place, carbon copies are useful in rewriting. Very often a rewrite on a script can be made largely with scissors and paste pot. This can be done only if you have a second copy that you can cut up and paste in your original copy to make a completed rewrite. There is certainly no need for laborious retyping when the same end can be accomplished with a pair of scissors, a little paste, and an extra copy. If the first carbon is used for rewrite, then there still must be another copy available to keep in the files. In case an author wants to copyright his work, a fourth copy should be available for this purpose. The moral to this story is: use carbon copies freely. Carbon paper and second sheets are cheaper than an author's time.

One last item under the heading of mechanics of radio writing is the matter of copyright. If a radio writer is freelancing and is marketing his stuff all over the country, he may wish to protect his scripts with a copyright. This is a simple, easy process. The writer should procure a series of cards from the United States Copyright Office in Washington, D.C. The proper form in this case is Form D-2, for dramatic compositions not to be reproduced in copies for sale. The writer simply sends to the Copyright Office a complete typewritten copy of the script, together with a filled-out application Form D-2 and one dollar. In due course of time, the Copyright Office will send back a notice that the manuscript has been received and copyrighted and give the author a copyright number. That is all there is to it. It is possible to copyright an entire series of scripts. It is not possible to copyright one script in the series and then send other scripts in subsequently under that same title. But if all scripts in a series are sent in at one time, one application card and one dollar will cover the entire program.

Most writers do not bother to copyright everything they write. If they have something they think has particular merit, they may copyright it in order to protect it. If a radio writer copyrights everything he writes, it becomes a fairly expensive process. On the other hand, it is the one sure protection against plagiarism.

Writing Routines

The beginning writer should form the habit early of doing some writing every day. It may be for only twenty minutes, or it may be for five hours, but some writing should be done every day. This is the only sure cure for the great enemy procrastination which attacks all writers at one time or another. Few writers report to an office at nine o'clock in the morning and quit at five o'clock in the afternoon. The very nature of the work makes their schedule their own. And this possibility makes it easy to procrastinate. The United States is full of people who are going to write the "next great American novel." Of course, they never get it written, because they are yearners instead of writers. The one sure way to stay out of the yearner category is to force yourself to do some writing every day.

It takes time for script and story ideas to develop. They do not come simply by sitting down and squaring yourself off at the typewriter. They come through a long process of gestation and mulling over and thinking about the problem at hand. For that reason it is a good idea to have several things "in work" at the same time. In that way, if one of the scripts meets a mental block and you can do nothing with it, lay it aside for a week, and do something else. This gives you something specific to have under way all the time. It allows for the slow process of creation to take place without holding you up unduly in your total output.

The beginning writer should certainly keep up a practice routine daily. Set yourself the exercise of writing a good opening. Try to write a character skit that will bring a person to life on paper that might be translated into sound by a good actor, and so create a new, believable character. Try to write a climax. In other words, set for yourself certain writing problems and do one or two of these each day in the same way and for the same reason that a concert pianist does a certain number of finger exercises and scales every day. Set yourself some plot problems to solve. Try to write some gag dialogue. Try to write a commercial for the closing of some program you have just heard on the air. Any one of these problems in writing is excellent to keep the writer in practice.

Create artificial pressures for yourself whenever that is possible. Promise a script to a certain person at a certain time. Practice self-discipline as much as is humanly possible. Set yourself a schedule and then see that you stick to it. Boast to your friends about the writing you are doing. Sooner or later they will want to see something you have done; if you can't produce it, you will feel very foolish indeed. Even such an extreme method of creating an artificial pressure has its value.

Write on a schedule. Set out for yourself a certain amount of work to be done at a certain time. Plan your day so that a certain amount of time is spent in writing. Don't be too ambitious about it. Don't try to set up for yourself, in a moment of rosy enthusiasm, a writing schedule which you would know an hour later would be humanly impossible for you to keep. If anything, err on the conservative side. Set for yourself a schedule of writing that it is completely possible for you to keep within the framework of your other activities. Having once set that routine, *never* under any circumstances or for any reason break your schedule. The first time your schedule is broken, it will cause you considerable mental disturbance. You will discover, however, that it will be easier to break two days later, and still easier to break a day after that. By the end of the week there will be no schedule at all. The only way to preserve a schedule is to keep it inviolate.

Be as objective as you can in observing your own work habits. Some people discover that they can work only in one room. When they have everything arranged to suit them, their surroundings are familiar, and there is nothing to distract them, they can write. Other people can take out a portable typewriter, set it on the back of a truck, and pound out copy standing up with a forty-mile-an-hour wind blowing. Most of your writing habits are conditional. Some of them may be matters of personal idiosyncrasy. There is no reason why you should not, within reason, humor yourself in these matters. But it is always well to keep yourself in fairly rigid discipline as far as your writing is concerned. Don't let too many temperamental factors prevent you from doing the job you have set for yourself. Much of the time a good writer may have to travel. This means that you cannot have your own room and your own particular window in front of you when you write. You may have to write under a variety of circumstances. The sooner you learn to do this and the better you learn to do it, the greater will be your output.

All these are mechanical matters which the new writer must learn. He must set for himself certain mechanical and work habits. Once these are ingrained, they will work for the writer for the rest of his life. If good habits are not set, a potential writer may be a miserable failure. Make your materials and your habits work *for* you.

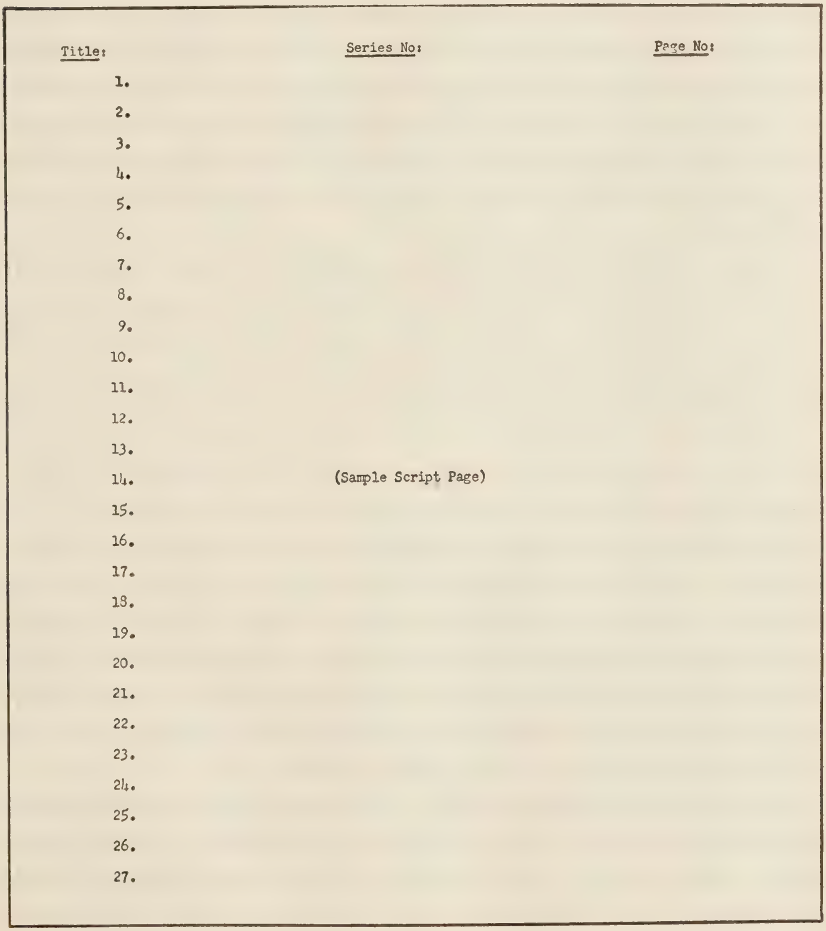
Procedures

The greatest mistake in the mechanics of writing which the beginner can make is to start immediately to write a script. Writing does not consist of sitting down to a typewriter and rolling a blank sheet of paper into your carriage. Much has to be done before the actual script is written. As a matter of fact, the writing of the script is, in many ways, the least important job the writer has to do. A good piece of writing must have as definite and well-planned a structure as a house. No architect would think of building a house by getting out some boards and a hammer and nails and starting to cut and saw. He would first of all make a very rough sketch of what is desired. This could be followed by more detailed sketches and finally by a series of blueprints which answer every question of construction down to the last eighth of an inch. A good writer must do exactly the same thing. Once a writer has the idea for a script, the next thing to do is to rough out the outline of that script.

When a rough outline is available, it can be checked and cross-checked against the desirable kinds of action and revisions made. If the writer is doing a dramatic program, he will next sketch his plot in detail, showing each move and countermove all the way through. He may even write character sketches of his characters and start the process of becoming familiar with them. Finally, he will begin to plot actual scenes — not by writing them, but by outlining notes on paper which will indicate what goes on in each scene, how much the plot develops, what ideas have to be planted, what characters introduced, and what progress made. This will be followed by a careful final outlining of the whole script. Then, and only then, is the writer ready to begin writing actual lines. All this planning process is necessary if wasteful rewriting is to be avoided. Rewriting is more often necessitated by poor planning than by poor writing in the first draft.

The last and one of the most important steps in the writing process is the business of rewriting and polishing. Unfortunately, this is the part of the work which radio writers are often not allowed to do. Because radio is a fast-moving medium, where the elapsed time between manufacture and market is extremely short, the process of writing, rewriting, and polishing is usually held to a minimum. This should not be true. There is just as much necessity in radio as in any other medium for rewriting and polishing. There is too much slap-dash writing going on in the field of radio. It is a tendency which is encouraged by the stations and networks, however, because of the pressure of time. Naturally, everyone would like to have all the time in the world for rewriting and polishing, but too often this is not possible.

The more adept a writer becomes and the more experience he has, the less rewriting he will have to do. Once a writer learns the trick of carefully blocking an outline of a script in advance, he has obviated much of his rewriting problems. All the holes in the plot, all the faults in basic program structure and weaknesses in characterization, are usually discovered then, which means that large sections do not have to be completely rewritten when the script is finished. The beginner may have to throw out his entire first draft and start over; with the experienced writer, the rewrite will be largely a matter of polishing individual lines. No matter how much rewrite is necessary, or how long it takes, it should always be done. If a writer begins by planning to work on a script until he has done everything to it that it is possible for him to do, he is setting sound writing habits.



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CHAPTER 7

THE POLICY BOOK

Every beginning radio writer should know the limitations which the medium of radio imposes upon him. A few of these are taboos specifically mentioned in the Communications Act of 1934 under which the Federal Communications Commission was authorized. Many more taboos are listed in the code of the National Association of Broadcasters. Each individual station and network also has its own policy book, which furnishes a list of "shalls" and "shall nots." Regardless of the source of censorship, there is a considerable degree of unanimity among these various restrictions and they tend to be common to the entire industry.

Why should radio be placed under such strict regulation? What is the basis of all radio censorship? The answer is very simple. Radio is a medium of communication unique in its relations to the public. It is the only means of communication or entertainment which enters the home unbidden. It can be argued that any listener can stop listening by the simple process of turning off his set. This is true, and insofar as it is true, radio is always invited into the home. When, however, a person decides to see a play, he probably knows something about that play. He has read about it in the newspapers or seen the reviews, and knows in general what it is like. Certainly, if he is particular, he will make a point of finding out about it. Once in the theater, he is there of his own free will, by virtue of having paid to get in. Presumably he has some idea of what he will see and hear before he buys a ticket.

In radio, on the other hand, the listener has no way of knowing what is going to come over his loud-speaker. He may have some vague notion from a two- or three-word listing in the newspaper, but that is about all. Or he may know the general program type if he has heard of it before. Beyond that he must take it on faith.

Because radio has such a wide range of ages in its audience and because there is no practical way of segregating the younger part of the audience from the older, except during certain times of the day, radio must conform to standards of purity and good taste suitable for listeners as young as five years. Such rigid standards may seem somewhat restricting, and they are. However, radio has discovered that the policy of self-censorship has paid good dividends in public relations.

The only way that the radio broadcaster and his audience can meet on safe ground is for the broadcaster to furnish the listener a blanket assurance that nothing indecent or even questionable will be broadcast into his home. The listener has this blanket assurance from all broadcasters.

There are comparatively few program regulations indicated in the Communications Act of 1934 or in the rulings of the Federal Communications Commission which it created. Most of the restrictions in radio are self-imposed by the stations and networks. Upon them is placed the burden of convincing the Commission that they are operating "in the public interest, convenience, and necessity" every time their license comes up for renewal. This is the threat which the Commission holds over the broadcast licensees.

The problem of self-censorship was undertaken by the National Association of Broadcasters. After considerable discussion the problem of censorship was finally summed up in what has come to be known as the NAB Code. This code was adopted July 11, 1939, at the seventeenth annual convention of the National Association of Broadcasters at Atlantic City, New Jersey. It has since been subject to certain clarifications and revisions, but still remains in essence the basis of all self-censorship for the radio industry. It is considered in many ways a model of self-regulation which other trade associations have regarded with considerable interest. Every radio writer should be familiar with this basic code.

THE NAB CODE

The Children's Programs

Programs designed specifically for children reach impressionable minds and influence the social attitudes, aptitudes, and approaches and, therefore, they require the closest supervision in the selection and control of material, characterization and plot.

This does not mean that the vigor and vitality common to a child's imagination and love of adventure should be removed. It does mean that the programs should be based upon social concepts and presented with a superior degree of craftsmanship; that these programs should reflect respect for parents, adult authority, law and order, clean living, high morals, fair play, and honorable behavior. Such programs must not contain sequences involving horror, or torture, or use of the supernatural or superstitious, or any other material which might reasonably be regarded as likely to overstimulate the child listener, or be prejudicial to sound character development. No advertising appeal which would encourage activities of a dangerous social nature will be permitted.

To establish acceptable and improving standards for children's programs, the National Association of Broadcasters will continuously engage in studies and consultations with parent and child study groups. The results of these studies will be made available for application to all children's programs.

Controversial Public Issues

As part of their public service, networks and stations shall provide time for the presentation of public questions, including those of a controversial nature. Such time shall be allotted with due regard to all other elements of balanced program schedules, and to the degree of public interest in the questions to be presented. Broadcasters shall use their best efforts to allot such time with fairness to all elements in a given controversy.

Time for the presentation of controversial issues shall not be sold, except for political broadcasts. There are three fundamental reasons for this refusal to sell time for public discussion and, in its stead, providing time for it without charge.

First, it is a public duty of broadcasters to bring such discussion to the public audience, regardless of the willingness of others to pay for it. Second, should time be sold for the discussion of controversial issues, it would have to be sold, in fairness to all with the ability and desire to buy at any given time. Consequently, all possibility of regulating the amount of discussion on the air, in proportion to other elements of properly balanced programming, or of allotting the available periods with due regard to listener interest in the topic to be discussed would be surrendered. Third, and most important, should time be sold for the discussion of controversial public issues and for the propagation of the views of individuals or groups, a powerful public forum would inevitably gravitate almost wholly into the hands of those with the greater means to buy it.

The political broadcasts excepted above are any broadcasts in connection with a political campaign in behalf of or against the candidacy of a legally qualified candidate for nomination or election to public office, or in behalf of or against a public proposal which is subject to ballot. This exception is made because at certain times the contending parties want to use and are entitled to use more time than broadcasters could possibly afford to give away.

Nothing in the prohibition against selling time for the presentation of controversial public issues shall be interpreted as barring sponsorship of the public forum type of program when such a program is regularly presented as a series of fair-sided discussions of public issues and when control of the fairness of the program rests wholly with the broadcasting station or network.

Educational Broadcasting

While all radio programs possess some educative values, broadcasters desire, nevertheless, to be of assistance in helping toward more specific educational efforts, and will continue to use their time and facilities to that end and, in cooperation with appropriate groups, will continue their search for improving applications of radios as an educational adjunct.

News

News shall be presented with fairness and accuracy and the broadcasting station or network shall satisfy itself that the arrangements made for obtaining news insure this result. Since the number of broadcasting channels is limited, news broadcasts shall not be modified according to any editorial policy. This means that news shall not be selected for the purpose of furthering or hindering either side of a controversial public issue nor shall it be colored by the opinions or desires of the station or network management, the editor or others engaged in its preparation or the person actually delivering it over the air, or, in the case of sponsored news broadcasts, the advertiser.

The fundamental purpose of news dissemination in a democracy is to enable people to know what is happening and to understand the meaning of events so that they may form their own conclusions, and, therefore, nothing in the foregoing shall be understood as preventing news broadcasters from analyzing and elucidating news so long as such analysis and elucidation are free from bias.

News commentators as well as all other newscasters shall be governed by these provisions.

Religious Broadcasts

Radio, which reaches men of all creeds and races simultaneously, may not be used to convey attacks upon another's race or religion. Rather it should be the purpose of religious broadcasts to promote the spiritual harmony and understanding of mankind and to administer broadly to the varied religious needs of the community.

Commercial Programs and Length of Commercial Copy

Acceptance of programs and announcements shall be limited to products and services offered by individuals and firms engaged in legitimate commerce, whose products, services, radio advertising, testimonials and other statements comply with pertinent legal requirements, fair trade practices and acceptable standards of good taste.

Brief handling of commercial copy is recommended procedure at all times.

Member stations shall hold the length of commercial copy, including that devoted to contests and offers, to the following number of minutes and seconds:

Daytime

Fifteen-minute programs	3:15
Thirty-minute programs	4:30
Sixty-minute programs	9:00

Nighttime

Fifteen-minute programs	2:30
Thirty-minute programs	3:00
Sixty-minute programs	6:00

> *Exceptions:* The above limitations do not apply to participation programs, announcement programs, "musical clocks," shopper's guide, and local programs falling within these general classifications.
>
> Because of the varying economic and social conditions throughout the United States, members of the NAB shall have the right to present to the NAB for special ruling local situations which in the opinion of the member may justify exception to the above prescribed limitations.

To clarify the phrase "accepted standards of good taste," used in the section on commercial programs, the convention adopted this resolution:

> Resolved, that member stations shall not accept for advertising:
>
> 1. Any spirituous or "hard" liquor.
> 2. Any remedy or other product the sale of which or the method of sale of which constitutes a violation of law.
> 3. Any fortune-telling, mind-reading, or character-reading, by handwriting, numerology, palm-reading, or astrology, or any advertising related thereto.
> 4. Schools that offer questionable or untrue promises of employment as inducements for enrollment.
> 5. Matrimonial agencies.
> 6. Offers of "home work" except by firms of unquestioned responsibility.
> 7. Any "dopester," tip-sheet, or race-track publication.
> 8. All forms of speculative finance. Before member stations may accept any financial advertising, it shall be fully ascer-

tained that such advertising and such advertised services comply with all pertinent federal, state, and local laws.

9. Cures, and products claiming to cure.

10. Advertising statements or claims member stations know to be false, deceptive, or grossly exaggerated.

11. Continuity which describes repellently any functions or symptomatic results of disturbances, or relief granted such disturbances through the use of any product.

12. Misleading statements of price or value, or misleading comparisons of price or value.

This code as outlined in the previous paragraphs, together with interpretations of it which have since been handed down by the Code Committee of the National Association of Broadcasters, forms the basic self-regulatory set of rules which is widely adopted by the broadcasting industry. Nearly all radio stations, when asked about policy, will refer to the NAB Code, indicating certain exceptions in cases in which their local situation has warranted them. Although deviations from the code are practiced by many stations, they are, for the most part, minor deviations and are, in most cases, specifically listed as deviations from the basic code.

This does not represent the total restrictions of any station or network. Most well-run stations and all networks have a fairly complete policy book which guides the continuity writers on that station through the maze of station and network policy.

The National Broadcasting Company has for many years held to certain policy standards which have been codified in their handbook called "Working Manual for Continuity Acceptance under NBC[1] Program Policies." The contents of this manual will be quoted here in detail, since this working manual offers one of the best statements of network policy yet to be recorded. While this set of policies may, in some respects, deviate from those of other major networks, at least in spirit it reflects those in use in the industry generally. It has the additional advantage of being specific, whereas the NAB Code tends to be general.

Since this whole matter of policy is so important to beginning writers in the field of radio, the contents of this program policy book are here reprinted for the guidance of the beginner in the field.

NBC WORKING MANUAL
FOR CONTINUITY ACCEPTANCE

Draft-May 14, 1943

I. PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES PERTAINING TO ENTERTAINMENT AND DRAMATIC PROGRAMS

1. *Sustaining and Commercial Programs*

The National Broadcasting Company is deeply conscious of its obligations to its audience. It is acutely aware that its continued success must be based upon the confidence of its listeners and it is determined to maintain that confidence.

It is our aim to provide a constant assurance that every listener may tune in an NBC program at any time with the certainty that he will hear program material in harmony with the highest ethical and moral standards.

The National Broadcasting Company subscribes to the code of the National Association of Broadcasters which governs the ethical standards of the industry. However, the program policies of the National Broadcasting Company go beyond and are in much more explicit detail than the National Association of Broadcasters' code. These program policies were first published in January 1934. As the experience of the Company has grown, these policies have been amended and expanded from time to time, with the object of assuring interesting, diversified programs, compatible with a sound concept of public service.

A. RELIGION

- *a.* The use of the Deity's name, or reference to His Powers and attributes, is permissible only when used reverently.
- *b.* Statements and suggestions which ridicule or deride religious views, creeds and the like must not appear in programs.
- *c.* Baptism, marriage, burial, or other sacraments and ceremonials must be handled with good taste and accuracy

whenever they are used. Ministers of religion represented in their calling shall not be reflected as undesirable characters or be made the subject of amusement.

B. Race

Since every man has a right to pride in his race, peoples of all nationalities and races shall be presented with fairness.

C. Marriage and the Home

In the treatment of these themes, respect for the sanctity of marriage and the home must be maintained in NBC programs.

a. Adultery, when the theme is essential to the plot, shall not be presented as a tolerated social condition or made attractive or glamorous.

b. The fact of marriage must never be used for the introduction of scenes of passion excessive or lustful in character, or which are clearly unessential to the plot development.

c. In the treatment of the triangle no inference should be left that extra-marital relations are socially or morally justifiable, and offenders should never be portrayed sympathetically.

D. Sex

The treatment of sex themes should be within the limits of good taste and decency, and never in such manner as to stimulate dangerous emotions in the young and immature.

a. Passion should not be suggested or treated outside the necessities of plot development.

b. Suggestive dialogue and double meaning must never be used.

c. The crimes of seduction or rape should never be subjects of comedy or treated otherwise than by mere reference.

d. White slavery, sex perversion or the implication of it may not be treated in NBC programs.

E. Crime

These shall never be presented so as to throw sympathies with the crime as against law and justice; or to inspire with a desire for imitation.

a. Murder.

1. The technique of murder shall never be presented in a way that will inspire imitation.
2. Brutal killings, torture, etc., are not to be presented in detail. The use of horrifying sound effects as such is forbidden. No character shall be depicted in death agonies, nor shall the death of any character be represented in any manner shocking to the sensibilities of the public.
3. Revenge as a motive for murder shall not be justified.
4. The presentation of classic examples of murder and other crimes, i.e., from well-known plays, etc., shall be consonant with the tenets of the best dramatic practice.

b. Methods of crime shall not be explicitly presented.

1. Crimes involving moral turpitude shall never be presented in detail or in any manner which may exalt.
2. Theft, robbery and other crimes shall never be presented in detail so far as methods are concerned.
3. Suicide shall never be presented as the solution of any human problem.
4. Crimes shall always be punished, either in detail or by implication.

F. EXPLOITATION OF CRIMINAL NEWS

Appearances or dramatizations of persons featured in current criminal or morbidly sensational news stories are not acceptable.

G. SIMULATED NEWS MATERIAL

Non-news programs shall not be presented as authentic news broadcasts.

Fictional events shall not be presented in the form of authentic news announcements. Likewise, no program or commercial announcement will be allowed to be presented as a news broadcast using sound effects and terminology associated with news broadcasts. For example, the use of the word "FLASH!" is reserved for the announcement of special news bulletins exclusively, and may not be used for any other purpose except in rare cases where by reason of the manner in which it is used no possible confusion may result.

H. PROFANITY AND OBSCENITY

Sacrilegious, profane, salacious, obscene, vulgar or indecent material is not acceptable for broadcast, and no language of doubtful propriety will be sanctioned.

I. INSOBRIETY AND NARCOTIC ADDICTION

Insobriety and excessive drinking must not be portrayed as desirable or as prevalent factors in American life.

Characters which rely on narcotic addiction for their appeal are not acceptable.

In general, the mention of intoxicants should be held to a minimum.

J. DEFORMITIES

Material which depends upon physical, mental or moral imperfections or deformities for humorous effect shall not be used in a way to give offense to sufferers from similar defects. The presentation of insanity for any sort of plot development will be judged on the basis of good taste.

K. REFERENCE TO INDIVIDUALS

References, whether jocular or serious, to living individuals shall be made only within the limits of good taste.

L. MISLEADING STATEMENTS

False and misleading statements in entertainment or straight commercial copy and all other forms of misrepresentation must be avoided. This applies to misrepresentation of origination point of program as well as to all other matters. Any words or sound devices which may tend to mislead or unduly alarm the public must be avoided.

M. SPEAKERS

NBC reserves the right to pass upon the qualifications of speakers on specialized, technical or scientific subjects.

N. CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Time for the presentation of controversial issues will not be sold except for political broadcasts during campaign periods.

Nothing in this prohibition shall be interpreted as barring sponsorship of the public forum type of program when such a program is regularly presented as a series of fair-sided discussions of public issues, and when control of the fairness of the program rests wholly with the broadcasting station of network.

The Company does not accept dramatized presentations of political issues.

In connection with its own sustaining programs, the Company at all times attempts as nearly as possible to give fair representation to opposing sides of every controversial question which materially affects the life or welfare of any substantial group.

The National Broadcasting Company does not censor the opinions of speakers who have been granted time on the air. It must, however, check for violations of the law and for libelous, slanderous or seditious statements, as the courts have held broadcasters responsible for damaging statements made over their facilities.

II. Policies Applicable to Children's Programs

NBC's obligation to both child and parent necessitates that all policies and standards of the company apply to children's programs, particularly where the values of right feeling and good taste are concerned.

All programs for children should have an over-all purpose, a motive, a goal to be reached, whether in high and dangerous adventure or by more leisurely methods.

The acceptability of programs for children will be measured by this standard by NBC.

A. Respect for Law

All stories must reflect respect for law and order, adult authority, good morals and clean living.

The hero or heroine and other sympathetic characters must be portrayed as intelligent and morally courageous. The theme must stress the importance of mutual respect of one man for another, and should emphasize the desirability of fair play and honorable behavior. Cowardice, malice, deceit, selfishness and disrespect for law must be avoided in the delineation of any character presented in the light of a hero to the child listener.

B. ADVENTURE

Adventure stories may be accepted subject to the following prohibitions:

No torture or suggestion of torture
No horror — present or impending
No use of the supernatural or of superstition likely to arouse fear
No profanity or vulgarity
No kidnapping or threats of kidnapping
In order that children will not be emotionally upset, no program or episode shall end with an incident which will create in their minds morbid suspense or hysteria.

C. COMMERCIAL COPY

It is consistent that fair play and considerate behavior be reflected throughout the commercial copy as in the script itself. Advice "to be sure to tell mother" or "ask mother to buy" must be limited to twice in the program. The greatest possible care must be used to see that no misleading or extravagant statements be made in commercial copy on children's programs. When promises are made as to the benefits to be derived from use of the product advertised, it will be necessary to submit proof that such promises can be kept.

D. CONTESTS AND OFFERS

Contests and offers which encourage children to enter strange places and to converse with strangers in an effort to collect box tops or wrappers may present a definite element of danger to the children. Therefore, such contests and offers are not acceptable.

E. DRAMATIZED APPEALS

No appeal may be made to the child to help characters in the story by sending in box tops or wrappers; nor may any actors remain in character and, in the commercial copy, address the child, urging him to purchase the product in order to keep the program on the air, or make similar appeals.

F. LUCK

No premium that depends upon its alleged "luck-bearing" powers for its attractiveness or in any fashion appeals to superstition will be approved.

G. Premiums

The National Broadcasting Company must be given assurance that no premium offer over its facilities is harmful to person or property.

H. Codes

The forming of clubs is often introduced on children's programs. Sometimes initiation requirements and other rules of such clubs are disseminated in code form. Full details concerning the organization of a children's secret society or code must be submitted to the National Broadcasting Company at least ten business days before its introduction on the air. In time of war or national crisis the Company specifically reserves the right to revoke its approval and require eliminations or substitutions in whole or in part of program content in code form.

Programs designed primarily for an adult audience often appeal to juvenile listeners. Such programs must avoid the use of any material likely to encourage among juveniles a disrespect for, or flouting of, established rules of social conduct.

III. Policies Applicable to News Programs

The philosophy of NBC's news and public information function is that:

NBC will maintain the highest possible standards of news coverage and public discussion on the air, avoiding harmful rumors, baseless reports, prejudiced opinion, subversive advocacy and unjustified attacks.

The Company will present no editorial opinion on its own account on the air, and will allow no newscaster or commentator in its employ to reflect any on its behalf.

While not maintaining an editorial policy for itself, NBC deems it within its news, informational and educational function to defend the rights of free expression on the air within the limitations of the medium, including the statements of informed opinion on the news developments of the day, the weighing and appraisal of controversial viewpoints or policies, and fair and competent criticism in its programs of men and affairs which is a function of news.

In defending these freedoms of expression, the Company accepts the duty and responsibility of reflecting, in due proportion and public interest, all shades of opinion and presenting all sides of a controversial issue.

News commentators, as well as all other newscasters, shall be governed by the following provisions:

A. Slander or Libel

In line with its responsibility, NBC will check all news reports, statements or addresses against any violations of the law, and for libelous, slanderous or seditious material.

B. Truth and Accuracy

Truth and accuracy must be the measure of all news broadcast by the NBC. The origin, authority and locale of all reports, rumors or official statements, given as such, should always be included in news or comment, so that the public may be able to weigh their relative importance.

C. Bias or Partisanship

It is the duty of NBC reporters, newscasters and commentators, and the condition upon which sponsored news or comment is accepted, to avoid bias or partisanship in news or comment, and no attempt will be tolerated to distort the meaning or emphasis of the news by any inflection of the voice.

D. Crime and Morbidity

Stories of crime or disaster must at all times be handled in factual forms, with the morbid, sensational or alarming treated with the judgment demanded in broadcasting to a universal audience.

No suicide shall be reported, except when the figure concerned or the facts involved give it national importance.

E. Flash

The use of the word "Flash!" is reserved for the announcement of special news bulletins exclusively and may not be used for any other purpose.

F. Lotteries

No lotteries, gambling odds or similar information shall be broadcast which might tend to cause listeners to gamble on the outcome of an event.

G. Professional Advice

No legal or medical advice is allowed in news broadcasts except when it is an essential part of legitimate news from official sources.

IV. Policies Applicable to Medical Accounts

The advertising of medical products presents problems of such intimate and far-reaching importance to the consumer that it is necessary to consider separately the standards established by the Company in respect to such advertising.

The hour of the broadcast and the appropriateness of the broadcast theme to the time of its presentation are factors that influence all radio programs. This is especially true in the case of programs promoting the sale of medical products.

In addition to the general commercial standards of NBC, advertising copy of medical products is subject to the following standards:

1. Facts

NBC will not accept advertising of a medical product unless all material facts concerning the product are made known to the Company. All medical accounts, new and renewals, must be submitted to Continuity Acceptance before commitments are made.

2. Claims

Due to the personal nature of the broadcast message, the Company reserves the right to strict control of claims made in medical advertising copy and to the phraseology in which these claims are made.

3. OPINION

No blanket statements purporting to reveal the opinion of a substantial portion of the medical profession in relation to the product advertised may be made in any of the continuity or advertising of the product, unless accompanied by satisfactory proof.

4. MORBIDITY

The Company cannot accept commercial copy which, in its opinion, dramatizes distress or morbid situations involving ailments.

5. HABIT-FORMING DRUGS

The Company will not accept a product for advertising which contains dangerous or habit-forming drugs or which fails to comply in advertising copy with Governmental rules and regulations.

6. TERMS

The words "same," "without risk," and "harmless" or words of similar meaning will not be accepted in medical copy.

7. SELF-MEDICATION

The Company will not accept advertising copy which endorses any product designed for relief of ailments known to be chronic, unremediable, or for conditions in which self-medication presents a risk. Books dealing with self-medications likewise will not be acceptable for advertising over Company facilities.

8. CURES

No cures nor copy which claims to cure are acceptable.

V. UNACCEPTABLE BUSINESS

Classifications of products and services printed below are specifically unacceptable for broadcast over the facilities of the Company. Of course, many accounts offered the Company may not fall into any of these classifications. In such instances the Company considers them individually and reserves the right to decide upon their suitability for broadcast advertising.

1. Professions in which it is conceded to be unethical to advertise. For example: physicians, lawyers, dentists, and others.
2. All forms of speculative finance and real estate intended to promote the purchase of specific stocks, bonds, properties, etc. Proposed programs advertising the general services of financial institutions will be subject to approval in each specific case after consideration and subject to federal, state, and local regulations relating thereto.
3. Medicinal products for which claim is made to cure or which encourage either self-diagnosis or self-medication.
4. Cathartics, including foods or beverages advertised primarily for their value as cathartics. Also products generally known and used exclusively as cathartics.
5. Personal hygiene products, including body deodorants.
6. Reducing agents.
7. Products to restore natural color to hair, eyebrow dyes, hair-growers, depilatories, and products advertised to remove wrinkles.
8. All forms of fortune-telling and any services which may be construed to belong to this general field.
9. Cemeteries, memorial parks, mortuaries, morticians, casket manufacturers, and other products or services associated with burial.
10. Wines and liquors — beer is acceptable, subject to local and federal laws.
11. Firearms and fireworks.
12. Matrimonial agencies.
13. Horse-racing organizations and racing publications desiring to use our facilities for the purpose of giving odds or promoting betting.
14. Schools, individuals, and organizations that imply promises of employment or that make exaggerated claims for the opportunities awaiting those who enroll for their courses. Likewise advertising for employment, except in particular cases confirmed by the United States Employment Service.
15. Groups and organizations whose services and functions are the dissemination of information dealing with general subjects of a controversial nature.

    This includes:

a. Groups or organizations formed to promote or defeat legislative or governmental issues, except during election campaigns. When such issues are on the ballot, time may be sold to parties favoring and opposing such political propositions.

b. Clubs and fraternal organizations. This specifically includes rejection of membership campaigns. Service organizations such as motor clubs are acceptable.

c. Religious denominations or groups.

d. Organizations sponsoring movements are not permitted to advertise their movements as such, nor to purchase time for the direct solicitation of memberships, but are permitted to purchase time for the purpose of selling goods or services.

VI. Continuity Acceptance Working Policy

A. Commercial Standards Enforcement

1. Dead-Line Continuities

All continuities, including the words of all spoken lines as well as the wording of the commercial copy, must be submitted to the Company at least forty-eight hours in advance of the broadcast, except when the nature of the program, such as comments on the news, does not permit. The forty-eight hour "dead-line" does not affect the advertiser's privilege to submit changes in his commercial continuity later.

Ad-lib programs on which written continuity cannot be supplied because of the nature of the program will be subject to strict supervision by the NBC Production Director assigned, and will be reported on by him to the Company from time to time.

2. Changes in Program or Announcement Material

All continuities, including the words of all songs or spoken lines as well as the wording of all announcements and a list of the cast, are subject to the approval of the Company.

The Company reserves the right at any time to revoke its approval of and to require of the advertiser, eliminations or substitutions, in whole or in part, of program or announcement material which the Company deems inconsistent with its standards or policies in effect at the time.

The Company reserves the right to investigate the accuracy of all statements and claims made in copy submitted for broadcast over its stations, and will not accept statements or claims which cannot be proved to its satisfaction.

3. Auditions and Previews

The Company reserves the right to require the advertiser or his agency to furnish a performed audition of a contemplated commercial program.

4. Musical and Literary Material

Upon request by the Company, evidence of the right to use musical or literary material must be supplied to NBC at least three full business days in advance of the broadcast.

5. Duplication

For the protection of both NBC and the advertiser, written lists in duplicate, showing correct titles, composers and copyright owners of the music to be used on the program are to be submitted to the Company at least one week before the broadcast, for copyright clearance. No changes may be made thereafter without approval of the Company's music rights department. When two or more advertisers using near-by periods submit programs containing the same musical number, the advertiser or his agent first submitting his detailed program shall have preference in the use of the number, and NBC will notify other advertisers to submit a substitute number, subject to the same restrictions as to duplication.

6. Impersonations

When a living character is impersonated, written authorization of impersonation must be furnished for individual broadcasts or covering specific periods of broadcasts by a given sponsor, and it must be clearly announced at least once in the program that such impersonation was made, unless the nature of the presentation makes it obvious that impersonation was made.

7. Testimonials

The laws of a number of states prohibit the use of a person's name for trade or advertising purposes without the written consent of such person. When there is submitted to NBC any script containing a testimonial or other use of a person's name for trade or advertising purposes, it must be accompanied by an original or photostatic copy of the written consent of the person whose name is to be used. Upon request original consents will be returned to the agency for its files after a copy has been made by NBC.

Blanket releases from agencies covering specific periods of broadcasting also will be acceptable, provided the agency in writing will assume responsibility for obtaining releases on all testimonials used.

8. Displays

Any plans for displays, sampling or distribution of material on NBC premises must be discussed with the Company at least a week prior to the broadcast at which it is intended any of these are to be introduced. Whenever possible, the Company will endeavor to assist the advertiser to carry out his plans. There are products, however, which may not suitably be introduced for sampling in studios, and there are times when displays may conflict with other programs. Therefore, the Company reserves the right to reject such plans if, in its opinion, they are impossible or impracticable of execution.

B. Program Content

1. Sponsorship

Announcement of sponsorship must be made on all commercial programs, as required by the Federal Communications Commission Act.

2. Defamation

No defamatory statements will be permitted. Statements which tend to undermine an industry by attributing to its products generally faults and weaknesses true only of a few, and statements which are derogatory to an individual, a group, a trade, a profession, an institution or an industry must be avoided.

3. COMPETITORS

Commercial programs shall not introduce derogatory reference to any competitor or his products.

4. PRICES

Statements of prices and values must be confined to specific facts. Misleading price claims or misleading or derogatory comparisons tend to challenge the integrity of all advertising and must not be used.

5. NETWORK CROSS-REFERENCE

When an advertiser using more than one network for advertising any of his products finds it desirable to refer to his program on a competing network, such reference must be confined to mention of the title of his program, the product advertised, the talent employed and the day on which the program is broadcast. Mention of the hour or the broadcasting facilities used may not be made.

When an artist or artists, regularly broadcasting for one advertiser, make guest appearances on the program of another advertiser, reference to the radio program or sponsor of the guest performer must be limited to an announcement similar to the following and will be made once during the broadcast:

"John Doe appears on this program through the courtesy of the .... Company, makers of (product)." Further reference to the radio program of the guest artist or his sponsor, or sponsor's product, may not be made.

6. LITIGATION

While factual statements are permitted on news programs, comment on, or discussion of, pending or prospective litigation must be avoided. Comment on pending court cases or hearings before administrative bodies may tend to interfere with the administration of justice.

7. APPEALS FOR FUNDS

Appeals for funds are generally unacceptable. The advertiser must clear with the Company before entering into agreements to publicize appeals for funds through his radio program.

8. POINT-TO-POINT

"Point-to-point communication" is not permitted. A broadcasting station departs from the terms of its license when it broadcasts a message intended primarily for a specific individual and not intended to be received by the public.

9. CALL LETTERS

In order to protect the identity of broadcasting stations and to prevent misunderstanding, broadcasters must clear with the Company any use of radio station call letters that may be necessary to the plot or action of broadcast programs.

10. DRAMATIZED COMMERCIALS

When dramatized commercials are used that involve statements by doctors, dentists, druggists, nurses, or other professional persons, the lines must be read by members of these professions reciting actual experiences, or it must be made clear to the listener that the scenes enacted are fictitious. As stated in further detail, fictional commercial copy shall not be presented with any devices or treatments associated with authentic news broadcasts.

11. TESTIMONIALS

Testimonials must reflect the authenticated experiences or opinions of competent living witnesses, and testimonials will not be accepted which contain claims unacceptable in other forms of commercial copy.

12. ANNOUNCERS' TESTIMONIALS

NBC announcers or other employees of the Company may not give personal testimonials on the air, nor personally endorse the advertiser's product, nor ask listeners to purchase the sponsor's product as a favor to themselves. Promises for the performance of the product may not be given in the first person singular by Company members.

13. LENGTH OF CREDITS

a. In order to maintain good program balance, the following ratios will be observed between commercial copy and other program content.

	Min.	Sec.
DAYTIME		
5-minute programs	2:00	120
5-minute news programs	1:45	105
10-minute programs	2:30	150
15-minute programs	3:15	195
25-minute programs	4:15	255
30-minute programs	4:30	270
60-minute programs	9:00	540
NIGHTTIME		
5-minute programs	1:45	105
5-minute news programs	1:30	90
10-minute programs	2:00	120
15-minute programs	2:30	150
25-minute programs	2:45	165
30-minute programs	3:00	180
60-minute programs	6:00	360

Exceptions: The above limitations do not apply to participation programs, announcement programs, shoppers' guides and local programs falling within these general classifications.

b. The length of commercial copy for news programs shall hold to the following number of minutes and seconds during wartime:

	Min.	Sec.
DAYTIME		
5-minute news programs	1:35	95
10-minute news programs	2:15	135
15-minute news programs	3:00	180
NIGHTTIME		
5-minute news programs	1:20	80
10-minute news programs	1:45	105
15-minute news programs	2:15	135

C. Contests

Proposed prize contests must be submitted for forwarding to the New York Continuity Acceptance Department of NBC in advance of the first public announcement in any medium typing in with the radio program, and at least ten days prior to the first broadcast of information concerning such contests. NBC will permit the broadcasting of contests only when they comply with the following regulations:

1. Equal Opportunity

   Contests must offer the opportunity to all contestants to win on the basis of ability and skill, rather than on chance. Games of chance are not acceptable.

2. Submissions

   The basis upon which contestants' submissions are judged must be clearly stated in each announcement of the contest except where all details are withheld in favor of a "teaser" announcement of a pending or current contest.

3. Decisions

   The opinion of the judges is final. Duplicate prizes must be awarded in case of ties. These provisions must be stated in the continuity except where all details are withheld in favor of a "teaser" announcement of a pending or current contest.

4. Closing Date

   Closing date of the contest must be made known to NBC when the contest goes on the air. If the contest is to be of short duration, its closing date must be stated during the first broadcast announcement of the contest; if of long duration, the termination date must be announced at least two weeks in advance.

5. Facsimiles

   While advertisers may require contestants to submit box tops, wrappers or other evidence of purchase of products, it is recommended they also provide that reasonable facsimiles thereof will be equally acceptable.

6. Approval of Awards

   Contest awards or prizes must be approved by NBC prior to the first announcement of the contest.

7. ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS

Contest decision should be made promptly, and the names of winners must be released as soon as possible thereafter. The announcement, whenever possible, should be made during a later program of the same series. When the broadcasting of the complete announcement of winners is undesirable because of its length, NBC must be supplied with the names of winners and other necessary information to place in the hands of one person authorized and designated by NBC who will be in a position to answer inquiries.

D. OFFERS

1. Full details of proposed offers, including samples of premiums and "build-up" copy must be submitted for investigation and approval at least five full business days before the first announcement is to be broadcast.

2. LUCK AND SUPERSTITION

No premium that depends upon its alleged "luck bearing" powers for its attractiveness or in any fashion appeals to superstition can be approved.

3. TERMINATION

It is desirable that announcement of the termination of an offer be made as far in advance as possible. When the advertiser wishes to withdraw his offer, announcement must be broadcast to the effect that listeners' letters in response to the offer may be postmarked not later than midnight of the business day following withdrawal of the offer.

4. COMPLAINTS

If a monetary consideration is required, the advertiser must agree to honor any complaints indicating dissatisfaction with the premium by returning the consideration. The advertiser must also hold NBC and the station free from all liability in connection with the offer. Where offers require a consideration the premium may not be described as a "gift" or as "absolutely free."

5. DRAMATIZED APPEALS

Dramatic action of radio drama may not be used as a basis of appeal for help in the commercial portion of the program. The fictitious character of the radio play may not be introduced into the commercial as follows: "By sending in a box top (wrapper or other consideration, including money), you will help Widow Jones to pay off the mortgage" or "you will help to send Johnny to school."

6. Address

All announcements on offers which require a written response from the audience should indicate that such responses be addressed not to NBC direct but to the sponsor, in care of NBC or to such other address as may be desired.

War Censorship Code

As early as 1939, the NAB went to work on the problem of handling war news. At that time the United States had proclaimed strict neutrality and the NAB set up certain codes intended to guide stations in the handling of news broadcasts in conformity with the program of neutrality. When the United States finally entered the war, broadcasting of war news became a matter for governmental supervision. This was handled by a succession of offices which finally crystallized into the Office of War Information under the direction of Elmer Davis.

The OWI, among its initial acts, set up a war censorship code for the guidance of newspapers and the broadcasting industry. This code was somewhat long and detailed and was primarily concerned with the kind of programs broadcast in connection with the handling of news on the air.

The first effect of its operation was removal from the air of all programs of request music broadcast by stations complying with telephone, telegraph, or written request for certain numbers. This restriction was made to prevent code messages from being delivered in this way. All man-in-the-street and informal interview programs, except those over which the station could exercise the strictest control, were also suspended for the duration. Restrictions in the handling of news were also codified.

The Communications Act of 1934 established the fact that radio is not a common carrier, meaning that it is not forced to sell time to all with the means to buy, first come, first served. If this were to be the case, the broadcasting industry would lose all control over its program schedule and could not possibly control the means by which it serves the public interest. As the NAB Code Committee pointed out, "Let it be remembered that American Radio is predicated on the right of the listener to hear, not upon the right of an individual to be heard." That is the basic philosophy in so far as selection of program material on the air is concerned. but it should not be interpreted in any way as an infringement of the right of free speech. Radio does not guarantee to every one of the hundred and thirty million people in the United States the right to speak over the air. It merely guarantees to the listener the right of a complete program service which is as fair to the public as is possible.

The limitations set forth in this chapter should not be construed as handicaps aimed at the writer. They are designed to protect radio, to protect the broadcaster and allow him to give as complete service as possible to the listener. The writer may find at times that these regulations place serious restrictions on his work. They may make certain writing assignments very difficult for him. Nevertheless, they must be observed because they represent a part of the obligation of any public service. Only in so far as the rights of the public are observed does radio continue to earn its privilege of working for the public. These rules establish the boundary within which the radio writer must work.

2

GENERAL CONTINUITY WRITING

CHAPTER 8

WRITING MUSIC PROGRAM CONTINUITY

There are certain over-all assumptions which apply to all kinds of music programs. In general, the continuity accompanying musical programs on the air is poorly done.

Although there is a tendency on the part of writers to attach little importance to the continuities for these programs, this indifference must be overcome before any attempt is made to write for such a program. Because the script is of secondary importance, the script must not be allowed to become hurried or pedestrian, trite or uninteresting. In the few musical programs in which an outstanding job has been done on the continuity, the whole program has been lifted tremendously. It is obvious that the less copy there is, the better it must be if it is to perform its function successfully.

Clearly the chief interest in a musical program is the music itself. The continuity, therefore, should be held to a minimum. The audience that tunes in a musical program does not want to listen primarily to a talk. A program of music alone, however, creates certain gaps in the listener's attention.

Continuity for a musical program is usually centered around the name of the piece being played, the name of the talent, and any special information regarding either the music or the performers. Beyond that, the continuity has not much to offer. What is more, the audience does not wish much more. The continuity, therefore, should be brief, interesting, and to the point. That it can fulfill these requirements will be seen from a study of the three different types shown on pages 147, 148, and 153.

The kind of music chosen will to a certain extent determine the type of audience. For example, a program built around old familiar music like *Love's Old Sweet Song* and *In the Gloaming* would hardly attract an audience of high-school jitterbugs. Such music would draw an audience of older people to whom that kind of music is attractive and familiar. The single exception to this rule might be a special effort made by a broadcaster to educate the tastes of an existing audience which he knows well. The famous Damrosch hour, for example, furnished a much more classical kind of music than would normally appeal to the particular audience toward which it was slanted. In this case, however, a special educational effort was made, and the continuity was handled accordingly.

The kind of music, then, determines the audience. The combination of the kind of music and the kind of audience will determine the kind of copy which the continuity writer must furnish. This business of slanting copy to a specific audience is something which every radio writer must learn and conform to early in his career. You would hardly write the same kind of copy for a program of dance music designed for a high-school audience as for a running commentary on a symphony program designed for lovers of serious music. Obviously, these are two different audiences, two different sets of tastes, two different vocabularies, and two completely different musical backgrounds for which you must write. It is only the soundest sort of common sense for the writer to adjust his whole style of writing, his vocabulary, and his personality to these varying audiences. Therefore, no matter what the kind of musical program, one should plan the copy to suit the music and the audience.

Various kinds of music tend to build up around them specialized vocabularies which are usually understood by their audiences. Certainly modern "jive" music has its own peculiar vocabulary. The same thing is no less true of symphonies or operas. There is a certain jargon, a kind of technical language which is peculiarly applicable to each particular kind of music. The audience which likes a given kind of music will probably understand its specialized vocabulary. While the use of a special vocabulary can be overdone, the continuity writer should conform to it whenever it will help to establish the atmosphere of the program, or provide the audience with the important pleasure of recognition.

When the musical program is built around a specific idea, it influences the style of copy. For example, suppose we are dealing with a program of recorded music commonly known as the "musical clock." One of the purposes of this program is to furnish a pleasant background for the family while they go through their matutinal performances. A second purpose is to tell the time periodically so that the listener can get to school promptly or make the eight-forty commuter's special. The specific idea here will influence the kind of continuity which is written.

The style of musical continuity will often be influenced by the person around whom the program is built. This may be a musician or simply an announcer on a recorded music program. In any event, if he is a definite personality and has built a definite style on the air, any program with which he is connected should follow that particular style. Examination of the script for *Chicago and Northwestern Line,* page 140, illustrates this point fully.

All these items will, in one degree or another, influence the style of continuity writing designed to accompany musical programs. In addition there will be other influences depending on the particular kind of musical program involved.

CONTINUITY FOR RECORDED MUSIC PROGRAMS

It should be realized at the outset that in many small stations there is no such thing as written continuity for the programs of recorded music which occur frequently during the day. The announcer on duty usually ad-libs his way glibly through the program, using the names of the numbers and the recording artists as a background for an offhand, extemporaneous description of the music involved. There is an occasional announcer who can make this kind of program interesting, even though it is ad-libbed. For the most part, however, such programs are very dull indeed. The copy is thoughtless, unprepared; it lacks originality and pattern. It is full of trite and endless repetition simply because the announcer, having no time to prepare, says the first thing which comes to his mind.

As long as small stations follow the policy of ad-libbing recorded music programs, the quality of these programs is not likely to improve.

Programs of recorded music differ from other kinds in that there are no personalities except that of the announcer on which the writer can build. His continuity must inevitably be monologue. Since there is no continuity to be read between the performer and the announcer, as is the case in other kinds of musical programs, the copy emphasizes the music, or the program idea, or the announcer's personality. These are about all that are left for the continuity writer. But there are far more possibilities than the average continuity writer for such a program realizes. Since all kinds of music are available on recordings, the range is wide. It may be hill-billy music, symphonies, light opera, or sacred music. Some hastily planned programs may present a hodgepodge of several types. The continuity writer must adapt his running comment to each change, so that the audience will feel that the right setting has been provided for each type.

Although programs of recorded music are often a heterogeneous sampling of records, with an announcer naming the next number in train-caller fashion, they could be made into exciting musical fare. After all, the world's greatest artists are available on recordings. It takes very little time and thought to turn a collection of these recordings into a good program.

What, then, are some of the principles that should govern the writer in building a good program of recorded music? First of all, there should be some homogeneity in the style of the music. Given a particular time of day, the writer knows approximately what kind of audience is listening. Music should be chosen which would be acceptable to this audience. Furthermore, to select music of a somewhat specialized type would help to trademark the program and give it a definite character. In this way it would be possible to build an audience following that would be unlikely to grow up around a heterogeneous collection of unrelated recordings. The style of the writing should conform to the audience you are trying to reach, the announcer who is assigned to work the program, and the kind of music with which you are dealing. Which one of these three factors will most influence the style will depend to a large extent on the purpose of the program and its personnel. Ideally, these things should match, although they do not always.

The next job is to avoid trite and stereotyped expressions. How many programs have you heard that sounded something like this: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! This is Joe Doakes back on that good old air bringing you fifteen minutes of recorded music. For our first number this evening, Tommy Dorsey plays ...." You've heard that or some slight variation on it a thousand times. It is the standard unthinking, unoriginal opening of a thousand and one announcers, living and dead, who faced the four walls of a transcription room with nothing to do but think of something to say on the air, and somehow or other they never get around to doing a very good job of that. From the "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen" to "The next number will be," the whole program is filled with a series of trite phrases, one after the other. This stereotyped treatment of copy, plus a haphazard selection of music, makes for a completely pointless, purposeless program.

The writer should understand that there is such a thing as structure even in a program of recorded music. The program should have an interesting opening, one that will arrest the attention of the audience and set it immediately in the mood for what is to follow. One of the best numbers on the program should be spotted-in for the opening. This can probably be followed by a slight letdown to a slower pace and a quieter style and built up again through succeeding numbers to the last, which should be the most exciting and the most interesting record in the group chosen.

Attention must be paid in a program of recorded music to the open and close. It is standard practice to open with a few bars of a recording which are then faded under while the announcer does his habitual "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen." Somewhere during the opening announcement, the so-called theme music drops into the background and disappears, only to bob up again toward the close of the program while the announcer is wondering whether he'll take it off the air now or ten seconds from now. There is little planning or clear operation in the opening and closing continuities. With a little time and trouble, suitable theme music can be found which will fit the program and the personality of the announcer and which can be woven into an opening and closing which is workmanlike, definite, and clean-cut.

The continuity for the program should include the names and numbers of all the records which are played or are intended for that particular program. These titles and recorded numbers are part of the regular data which must be included in every script. Even if the announcer ad-libs the whole thing, this information must show on the station's log.

A good deal has been said about building recorded music around a basic idea or specific kind of music. Suppose we cite some examples. A large volume of Victor Herbert's music has been recorded. If the station has a spot which it thinks is likely to attract older people, a program might be designed for that audience. Older people like familiar music, especially music which they associate with their childhood. Victor Herbert's music would meet this requirement admirably. What is more, a fairly large variety of it is available by good artists on good recordings — enough to keep such a program on the air for some time.

There is always an audience for the latest swing music. It is a favorite with young people who spend much of their time listening to the radio. A program called *Jive Dive* might be built for this specific audience. It would be designed to acquaint the high-school jitterbug with the latest releases made by popular orchestras each week. A point could even be made of the fact that the releases are just being made available in a local record shop. The high-school crowd always feels it must keep informed about the latest releases. It is therefore good subject matter for a program.

More and more stations are finding a large, enthusiastic audience for symphonies. Many stations which have taken the trouble to get a good collection of symphony records and to advertise their programs well in advance in the newspapers have discovered that they have a loyal and constantly increasing audience for such programs. Continuity for a symphony program might include a slight amount of education in the field of classical music. A little research into the lives of composers and conductors will bring to light enough material for an interesting commentary.

A program called *Covered Wagon Days*, specializing in folk music, finds a large audience in many localities. Even the title suggests some approaches which can lift the continuity out of the ordinary stale "The-next-number-is" kind of program. Incidentally, much good folk music has been recorded. A program of folk music would attract an audience a level above the one which likes hill-billy music.

One of the richest deposits of recorded music is the long list of musical-comedy favorites. Enough is available for any number of interesting programs. This kind of music has a definite nostalgic value which the continuity writer may count on to help interest his audience, not only in the music itself, but in the continuity which accompanies it. Certainly a program with a definite flavor and individuality can always be built around such music.

All of these ideas are common ones; most of them have been used successfully by stations that take a little more trouble with their recorded music than the average station. In almost every case in which some care and attention has been paid to building programs of recorded music, there has been a corresponding response in terms of audiences. With this definite evidence of listener interest in well-handled programs of recorded music, it seems odd that more stations have not improved their fare in this field. It must fall to the continuity department of the station and to the embryonic continuity writers to carry the torch in this particular cause.

The beginning writer may find that the record card catalogue or the master catalogues issued by the large recording companies will be helpful in giving him program ideas and information. Most stations maintain a rather comprehensive card catalogue of the recordings and transcriptions available in the record library. In addition, most small stations have one or more transcription services which make available a wide selection of music. Most of these services are carefully catalogued and the catalogue, together with provisions for loose-leaf or card additions, comes with the recordings. The catalogue gives the writer a source for checking on available music and may also suggest program ideas or new ways of writing his copy.

Below is a sample of one kind of recorded music script which has been making history for many years in Chicago. Originated by Norman Ross and currently being done by Patsy Gallicchio, The Northwestern Hour has a large slice of metropolitan Chicago listeners during the early morning when it is on the air. Using only classical music from a fairly restricted list, this program has built up a large following. The formula is simple. The time is given about every five minutes. Advice about the weather and general information come every ten minutes. The introductions to the music are simple and brief. These are ad-libbed. The only copy which is done from script is what follows here.

CHICAGO AND NORTHWESTERN LINE — WMAQ — 7:00 to 7:55 A.M.

THEME: LET RUN FOR APPROXIMATELY TWO MINUTES, CUT FOR . . .

ANNOUNCER: Good morning again! This is Patsy, introducing another "400" Hour Program for the Chicago and Northwestern Line . . . fifty-five minutes of truly great recorded music — together with time signals and weather reports . . . brought to you with the compliments of the Northwestern Railway. Our first selection this morning will be (NAME OF SELECTION) by (COMPOSER). The recording is by the (NAME OF ORCHESTRA).

MUSIC: FIRST NUMBER.

ANNOUNCER: Did you know there were four pearls in the royal British crown? Well . . . I didn't either, and the matter doesn't seem particularly important or interesting, in any event.

But, it seems it is. The pearls weren't just picked up at a jeweler's and stuck in there. There is an intriguing story connected with them . . . and it's been made into a film, which is being shown free of charge at the Art Institute of Chicago tomorrow afternoon at two-thirty. The picture has a rich historical background. Sounds like it might be an interesting way to spend an hour tomorrow afternoon, doesn't it. Well, the next selection on the list this morning is . . . (FILL IN)

MUSIC: SECOND NUMBER.

ANNOUNCER: Railroad workers are war workers. The jobs they do are as essential as any performed on the home front. But that fact isn't enough for Edward F. Boam, a baggage mail loader for the Northwestern. Listen to this . . . Edward had a back-pay allowance coming. It amounted to $133.53. That will buy a lot of necessities or a lot of fun, if you want to spend it that way. But Edward had a better idea. He asked the Northwestern to contribute the entire amount of his allowance to the Red Cross Fund. He didn't hold back even the price of a movie. And that, we think, matches the unselfish service which the Red Cross extends to our war effort.

(INTRODUCTION OF NEXT MUSICAL NUMBER.)

MUSIC: NEXT NUMBER.

ANNOUNCER: While Sheboygan, Wisconsin, bustled with activity as an important Great Lakes port, the German farmers began harvesting phenomenal crops from the land they had cleared. They raised oats, potatoes, and wheat, and, in 1849, the first of many grain elevators was built. That year Sheboygan exported 30,000 bushels of wheat and quantities of lumber, whitefish, barreled pork, and wool. By 1856, more than $700,000 in exports flowed from the town, and by 1860, there were twenty flour mills in the county. But wheat-raising was reaching its peak and was soon to be supplanted by another agricultural giant — dairying. Hiram Smith began the making of cheese in 1859, and the first cheese factory was erected in 1864. Cheese was on its way to becoming Sheboygan's most famous product. Here's an interesting sidelight on the cheese business. When the Sheboygan product was first taken to Chicago for sale, the dealers — figuratively, at least — turned up their noses. The cheese-makers were desperate — until one canny dairyman paid a dealer to take the time to examine the Sheboygan cheese. That turned the trick, and by 1867 Sheboygan cheese was bringing higher prices than the product of the famed New

York and Ohio cheese-makers. Today, in case you don't know, Sheboygan County is the largest cheese shipping center in the United States. In the eighteen-sixties, Sheboygan also became famous for another product — chairs. Several large furniture factories were opened, and chairs began to be turned out by the millions every year. There was also another item of importance — wooden shoes. And, with that, let's step on to our next musical number. (FILL IN.)

MUSIC: FOURTH NUMBER.

ANNOUNCER: We have a little problem on our hands these days, and if you're a commuter on our suburban trains, you can help us solve it. The problem is cash fares. In the days before the war, they didn't cause much bother. But now, sometimes they do. You see, the suburban conductors and collectors are busier than ever these days, and often a collector is new on a run. That means that when a cash fare comes along, he has to get out his tariff book to look up the correct fare. *That takes time.* Then, he often has to make change . . . that takes *more* time. And, though they do their best, sometimes the money to make change isn't in their pockets . . . there goes a little *more time.* All this doesn't sound so serious, but I'm told it really adds up to quite a lot. So . . . won't you do this, folks? Before boarding the train, stop at the ticket window . . . Or, if you use the service fairly often, buy a 10- or 25-ride commutation ticket. It will save you time and bother — and some money, too. I don't think I need to tell our regular daily commuters how much the Northwestern appreciates your buying your monthly tickets early. It's a big help and we're grateful. Now . . . (FILL IN NEXT NUMBER.)

MUSIC: NEXT NUMBER.

ANNOUNCER: All right, you Sam Campbell fans, I'm all ready with the information about where Sam is going to be for the next seven days. So, if you're eager to hear the old "Philosopher of the Forest" and see his beautiful color movies, here are the places you can do it. Tomorrow night — that's Saturday — Sam will be out in Hinsdale at the Monroe School . . . On Monday he will be in Park Ridge at Saint Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church . . . Tuesday, he will be back in Chicago, out on the South Side at the Calvary Methodist Church, which is at Morgan and 78th Streets. The hour for all of these appearances is 8:00 P.M. If you haven't seen Sam's pictures lately, or if you've never seen them, you'll enjoy the movie trip he takes you on. You'll also get a kick out of Sam playing with his pet porcupines.

THEME: UP AND THEN FADE UNDER.

ANNOUNCER: Well, friends, that wraps it up for another day . . . But be sure to join us again tomorrow morning . . . when the "400" Hour will bring you another fifty-five minutes of the world's finest recorded and transcribed music, together with frequent time signals and weather reports — with the compliments of the Chicago and Northwestern Line — the route of the "400" Streamliner Fleet, the Western Streamliners, and the Challengers. This is Patsy signing off — until seven o'clock tomorrow morning.

MUSIC: THEME UP AND END.

The subject of recorded music programs cannot be left without a mention of the problems involved in what is known as the "participating program." This is a program of recorded music jointly sponsored by several clients. More specifically, it is the station's vehicle for a series of unrelated spot announcements varying in length from twenty seconds to a minute. There is much that the sales department or the station manager could do to give such programs more appeal, but unfortunately there is little that can be done by the writer. Often the commercials are transcribed, so that there is no control over the commercial copy.

If the continuity writer is also the builder of the program and can group announcements according to some sort of sensible classification, the commercial copy and the music continuity can be managed with at least a minimum of difficulty. This problem will be discussed more in detail under the heading of "Commercial Writing," where it properly belongs. If the writer is simply given a list of heterogeneous spot announcements to weave into a fifteen-minute program of recorded music, there is little he can do except take time out between numbers for a commercial, and then proceed with his introduction of the next number in the usual manner.

These programs make poor listening and they create almost insurmountable writing problems. In spite of these disadvantages, they will probably continue to exist because of the large revenue they provide. A few large stations are eliminating them, but most small stations will probably continue to use participating programs for some time to come.

Live Talent Musical Programs

As soon as we step from recorded music into the field of live talent, many more possibilities for the continuity writer open up. For one thing he need no longer furnish lines for an announcer working in a vacuum. The mere fact of performers in a studio gives the announcer somebody to work with. If the continuity writer can supply lines for the performers so that they as well as the music can be incorporated into the continuity, the possibilities of variety multiply themselves immediately.

As soon as the writer is assigned a continuity for a live talent show, he already knows something about his job. He knows the name of the program, the commercial company sponsoring it, and who the performers are. Knowing the talent will give him some indication of the kind of music that will be used. If he knows that Dinah Shore, for example, is to be the talent on the program, he can easily guess the kind of music that will be played, the kind of audience that will be listening, and the kind of comment they will appreciate. He can then set about fulfilling those expectations with just that addition of originality and fillip which a good writer can give to a program.

Whenever possible the talent should be written into the continuity. The additional voice will make for more variety and a freer give-and-take in the studio. It will help to keep the program from becoming monotonous. It will also acquaint the audience more completely with the personality of the talent as well as with the announcer who is introducing the performers. Orchestra leaders, vocalists, members of vocal and instrumental teams, may turn out to be good air personalities if they are given a chance. Certainly they offer the continuity writer some opportunity to deviate from the routine announcement of numbers. Audiences like to feel that they know their favorite performers. If they know a vocalist only by his singing, they never feel quite so close to that person as though they have also heard him talk. A skillful continuity writer capitalizes this desire to get acquainted with radio personalities. By writing dialogue for the performers the continuity writer can give a warm, human, person-to-person approach to the program which it might not otherwise have. Notice how this device is used in the *Reveille Roundup* program at the end of this chapter.

In other kinds of programs, music shares the spotlight with other elements. These types of program present a slightly different problem to the continuity writer. Perhaps the program is divided equally between music and some personality, possibly a comedian; or music and a program idea may get equal billing and spotlight. In still other kinds, music may furnish the background for some other content in the program. All these variations from a straight musical program offer peculiar problems and special possibilities to the continuity writer.

A classic example of this kind of program is the *Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street* which found wide popularity on the air for several years. This program was basically musical, but had a definite continuity twist which gave it its whole flavor and interest. The musical part was simply a good version of current swing music. But the continuity which accompanied the music lifted it out of the ordinary. The whole idea was simple. It set out to satirize the program notes of symphony programs and to apply them to popular music. It was an original idea, it was well done, and it caught on. While the music on the program was good and had considerable originality, it was the fun of the basic idea and the cleverness of the continuity writer who designed it that gave it its large national audience.

The right kind of continuity contributes to the success of programs in which poetry is read with a musical background, or in which a story is told backed with music. "Mood" programs that are highly successful have also been developed. In such programs as these, the continuity of the program sets out to establish a definite mood which is then reinforced and expanded by the music which is interwoven with it.

Here are ten common "do's" and "don'ts" in preparation of continuity for a musical program.

1. Don't use the word "render," meaning to play.
2. It is well to identify a number before and after it has been played. The listener may not pay any attention to its previous announcement and then discover he likes it very much. In that event he wants to know what it was, and the identification following the number gives it to him.
3. Keep your music homogeneous.
4. Make continuity pertinent and specific.
5. Avoid the overuse of "Ladies and Gentlemen."
6. Don't try to write continuity for music you have never heard.
7. Build your program around a specific idea.
8. Avoid the trite patter of the ad-lib announcer.
9. Make the opening interesting and the close definite.
10. See that your style of copy fits the music and the audience.

In order that the beginning writer may have some patterns to go by, some musical continuities are included here. These should not be considered as necessarily perfect scripts, but rather typical examples of good practice. They will serve to give the beginning writer at least an idea of how certain programs look on paper.

The first sample is a script from *Reveille Roundup,* a program of old-time popular music featuring Louise Massey and the Westerners. The group accompanying Miss Massey consists of four very versatile musicians playing accordion, string bass, guitar, and trumpet as a basic unit, and they often double violin, banjo, and vocals. The program is simple and unassuming. Everyone has fun, including the performers and the audience. The script looks like this:

MUSIC: BUGLE CALL.

KIRBY: "Reveille Roundup," brought to you by Grove Laboratories, serving the health of the nation for over fifty years.

MUSIC: THEME.

KIRBY: Well, how are you all today, friends — this is Kleve Kirby a-coming at you, and welcoming you to another "Reveille Roundup" with Louise Massey . . .

LOUISE: Hello everyone.

KIRBY: . . . and the Westerners . . .

ALL: Hi, neighbors.

MUSIC: ON THE OLD FALL RIVER LINE.

KIRBY: FIRST COMMERCIAL.

MUSIC: BANJO: OLD-FASHIONED LOVE.

KIRBY: And that, friends, was Allen Massey — playing "Old-Fashioned Love" . . . on his long-handled shovel. You know Allen's the temperamental one — he'll pick up a chair and throw it any time . . . look out, here comes one now. Hello, there, Louise. Did you have any trouble dashing through the snow today?

LOUISE: Did I! Why, Kleve, I had to dig a tunnel to get here today.

KIRBY: Aw, you don't expect me to believe that, do you?

LOUISE: Why, Kleve — do you mean you think I'm exaggerating?

KIRBY: Well . . . yes, I do, Louise.

LOUISE: I guess you're right, Kleve . . . but I sure could have used some Silver Wings.

KIRBY: Which, friends, brings us right into the name of our next song — "Silver Wings in the Moonlight." Let's hear it, Louise.

MUSIC: LOUISE: SILVER WINGS IN THE MOONLIGHT.

KIRBY: Thank you, Louise . . . that was really swell. Here's medley-time, friends, and Larry Wellington's gonna start things off playing . . .

LARRY: "Ukulele Lady" for:
Asheville, North Carolina.
Lapel, Indiana.
Goldfield, Nevada.

MUSIC: ACCORDION: UKULELE LADY

KIRBY: And now here's Curt Massey to sing . . .

CURT: "With My Head in the Clouds," for Sunbury, Pennsylvania

MUSIC: CURT: WITH MY HEAD IN THE CLOUDS.

KIRBY: All right now — here's Louise to sing . . .

LOUISE: "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning," for Camden, New Jersey.

MUSIC: LOUISE: OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING.

KIRBY: And now all the Westerners sing "Carry Me Back to the Lone Prairie," for Whitman, Massachusetts.

MUSIC: TRIO: CARRY ME BACK TO THE LONE PRAIRIE.

KIRBY: SECOND COMMERCIAL.

MUSIC: CLOSER: CHIQUITA.

KIRBY: CLOSING COMMERCIAL.

MUSIC: THEME.

LOUISE: Well, it's time for us to be on our way — but we'll all be back again — you know when. So until next time, this is Louise Massey and the Westerners saying Hasta la vista, adios, amigos.

KIRBY: "Reveille Roundup," with Louise Massey and the Westerners, is sent to you three times each week by Grove Laboratories. This is Kleve Kirby saying tune in again, won't you, friends?

MUSIC: UP AND OUT.

One of the classic examples of a musical program which has been lifted out of the mediocre by excellent continuity is *The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street.* A sample of this program is included here for two reasons. First of all, it will show the student writer what this successful program looks like in script form. The really interesting fact about this script is that its charm and central idea do not shine clearly through in the script itself. Much of the charm of the program idea depends on the handling of lines as well as the lines themselves. The writer must remember that this program was started as a satire on the symphony program notes given in the very authoritative manner of Milton Cross. The fact that Milton Cross also reads this zany copy in the same manner as he would treat a symphony script is half of the fun of the program. At any rate, here is what it looks like in print.

THEME: BASIN STREET. FADE UNDER CHAPPELL.

CHAPPELL: Woodbury, the makers of Woodbury complete beauty cream, for the skin you love to touch, brings you another concert of the Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street, with Paul Lavalle and the orchestra, Milton Cross, Dick Todd, and our special guests — the famous swing pianist, Earl "Father" Hines, and the noted night-club singer, Maxine Sullivan!

THEME: UP FULL TO FINISH.

(APPLAUSE.)

CHAPPELL: Maestro Paul Lavalle and the Woodbury Symphony open the concert with, "Ay! Ay! Ay!" from the motion picture, "Mexican Spitfire Pays Her Income Tax." Maestro!

MUSIC: Ay! Ay! Ay! ORCHESTRA.

CHAPPELL: You know, I've discovered that I have a strange power. I can make people run out of their houses screaming and tearing their hair. How do I do it? Just by saying, "Here is your chairman, Doctor Milton J. Cross!"

(APPLAUSE.)

CROSS: Greetings, music lovers. Tonight our concert hall is packed with a glittering array of notables. I see Mrs. Cornelius Astorbilt, Adolph Schultz, Countess La Ponza, Adolph Schultz, Mrs. Otto Van Griffner, and Adolph Schultz.

JACK: Doctor Cross, who is Adolph Schultz?

CROSS: My butcher. He promised me a free steak if I mentioned his name on the air. But now for our first guest of the evening, Maxine Sullivan. Maxine Sullivan's singing is a favorite of radio fans, night-club patrons, and juvenile delinquents, everywhere. Her voice is low and haunting in quality, and is reminiscent of the sound of the gentle South Wind moaning through an empty beer bottle. Now here she is . . . Maxine Sullivan!

(APPLAUSE.)

SULLIVAN: Thank you.

CROSS: Maxine, you first gained fame by taking that old Scotch song, "Loch Lomond," and swinging it.

SULLIVAN: Yes, Doctor Cross. "Loch Lomond" was a lucky break for me. I recorded it, and the record sold like hotcakes.

CROSS: I bought one. Even with butter and syrup, it still tasted like a record. But, let me ask you this: Of all the old songs why did you select "Loch Lomond," as the one to be jazzed up?

SULLIVAN: Well . . .

CROSS: A very interesting story. How many times have you sung it?

SULLIVAN: I guess the number of times is way up in the thousands. As a matter of fact, whenever I leave the house, my husband begs me not to sing "Loch Lomond" again.

CROSS: It would be better if he begged you not to sing, period. I hope he's not listening in, because I see you are programmed to sing it now. So, Maxine, you take the high road and I'll take the low road . . . and I'll be in the booby hatch before you.

MUSIC: "LOCH LOMOND" . . . SULLIVAN VOCAL.

(APPLAUSE.)

FIRST COMMERCIAL.

CROSS: The next feature of this evening's entertainment is . . .

CHAPPELL (INTERRUPTING): The answer to every girl's dreams!

CROSS: Doctor Chappell! You know Hank Finatra isn't here. Or do you mean *me*?

(ALTERNATIVE: Well, who's the handsome hero? . . . Me?)

CHAPPELL: I don't mean any man . . . or you . . .

(CONVICTION) I mean Woodbury Complete Beauty Cream.

FIRST COMMERCIAL.

MUSIC: "DON'T SWEETHEART ME" . . . ORCHESTRA.

(APPLAUSE.)

CROSS: That was "Don't Sweetheart Me," played by the Woodbury Symphony under the baton of Maestro Paul Lavalle. Here we might note that in college, Maestro Lavalle was well liked. The members of his graduating class voted him the man most likely to become a midget. But, now, coming onstage is our next artist, Dick Todd, our prefabricated crooner. Last week Mr. Todd made a personal appearance at the Elks Convention. The Elks made a great impression on him . . . he came home with antlers in his pantlers. Mr. Todd, what song are you going to drive off the Hit Parade?

TODD: "I'll Be Around."

CROSS: Mr. Todd, you *are* round. But go ahead.

MUSIC: "I'LL BE AROUND" . . . DICK TODD . . . VOCAL AND ORCHESTRA.

(APPLAUSE.)

CROSS: Our next guest is Earl Hines. Music critics agree that you would have to look pretty hard to find a pianist with such talent – fortunately. Earl comes from a musical family. His father was a trumpet player, his mother an organist . . . and recently Earl's uncle was appointed first violinist of the Sing Sing Symphony Orchestra. Friday, Earl was called to give a command performance before his draft board. After listening to him play . . . the entire draft board enlisted. So now here he is, pianist, composer, conductor, and dissipated . . . Earl "Father" Hines.

(APPLAUSE.)

CROSS: Earl, you are always referred to as Earl "Father" Hines. Why do they call you "father"?

HINES: Well, Doctor Cross, I guess it's because I treat the musicians in my band as my own sons.

CROSS: I've heard your band play. What a way to treat a father! Now, what's this business about you getting your piano-playing technique from Louis Armstrong?

HINES: That's true. Louis Armstrong's trumpet playing had a great effect on my style of playing.

CROSS: It must have had. You're the only pianist I've ever seen who plays the piano by blowing on the keys. Now, what are you going to play for us tonight?

HINES: Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose."

CROSS: Oh, we had the honor of having Fats play that for us a few months ago.

HINES: Well, if you don't mind, I'd like to dedicate it to his memory.

CROSS: A very nice gesture . . . (UP). Earl Hines goes over to the piano. He finds a stool too low to suit his taste. He gives it a twist . . .

SOUND: RATCHET . . . SIX OR SEVEN TURNS.

CROSS: . . . and from the ceiling we hear Earl Hines playing "Honeysuckle Rose."

MUSIC: "HONEYSUCKLE ROSE" . . . HINES . . . PIANO SOLO.

(APPLAUSE.)

CROSS: Bravo, Earl, bravo! Music lovers, you have just heard Hines' 57 Varieties — of corn. Always wishing to further the understanding and knowledge of music, we bring you now our Musical Depreciation Moment.

BUSINESS: PIANO . . . RUNNING UP AND DOWN SCALE . . . QUICKLY.

CROSS: That was it. So we leave the realm of music and turn to Maestro Lavalle and the Woodbury Symphony, sometimes referred to as the world's greatest musical aggravation. Tonight, they tear to pieces George Gershwin's "Sweet and Lowdown." Knowing this band, it won't be sweet . . . but it will be lowdown. Maestro!

MUSIC: "SWEET AND LOWDOWN" . . . ORCHESTRA.

(APPLAUSE.)

CHAPPELL (INTERRUPTING DOCTOR CROSS): Wait a minute, Doctor Cross. I have something really important to tell the girls. About love.

CROSS: Love conquers all. I yield the microphone.

CHAPPELL: SECOND COMMERCIAL.

MUSIC: PLAY OFF . . . ORCHESTRA.

CROSS: Maxine Sullivan returns now for an uncalled-for encore. She is to sing the old English ballad, "Oh, no, John!" This work tells the story of two herrings named John and Lindy. One day Lindy meets a little girl herring and falls in love with her. He says to her, "I love you, let's find a preacher and get marry-in-ated." She agrees. The day for the wedding arrives, but Lindy doesn't show up. The little girl herring asks John, "Where is your brother Lindy?" To which he replies, "How do I know? Am I my brother's kipper?" Next Christmas I hope someone gives my writer a brain. Sing, Miss Sullivan.

MUSIC: "OH, NO, JOHN" . . . MAXINE SULLIVAN VOCAL.

(APPLAUSE.)

CROSS: Maxine Sullivan is now leaving the stage . . . I hope. According to my program notes, Maestro Lavalle and the Woodbury Symphony now take us on a musical trip to Hindustan. This is a new one on me . . . I've seen a crackerjack box, I've heard a peanut whistle, but I've never seen a Hindu-stan. (These jokes are going to put radio back twenty years.) Play, Maestro Lavalle.

MUSIC: HINDUSTAN . . . ORCHESTRA.

(APPLAUSE.)

CROSS: ANNOUNCEMENT.

MUSIC: THEME . . . BASIN STREET . . . FADE UNDER CHAPPELL.

CHAPPELL: And so, music lovers, we have caused our quota of con sternation, but we'll be back next week with another concert of the Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street, when our special guests will be Nan Wynn of the movies and the Adrian Rollini trio. Until then, this is Doctor Ernest Chappell bidding you all farewell for Woodbury Complete Beauty Cream, for the skin you love to touch.

MUSIC: THEME . . . UP AND FILL TO FINISH.

(APPLAUSE.)

One of the much-loved and much-listened-to musical programs on the air is *Hymns of All Churches.* A script from this program is included here as a sample of what continuity is like on such a program.

BUSINESS: CHIMES.

BUSINESS: THEME . . . FADE.

ANNOUNCER: For an interlude of peace and contentment, let's listen to HYMNS OF ALL CHURCHES . . . presented by General Mills.

BUSINESS: THEME UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER: OPENING COMMERCIAL.

BUSINESS: CHIMES.

BUSINESS: BACKGROUND: "IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST I GLORY."

ANNOUNCER: Here is Franklyn MacCormack with your hymns and poems . . .

MACCORMACK: Thank you, Vincent Pelletier, and greetings, friends, to another week of "Hymns of All Churches." We're happy to have you with us today – on the air and here in the studio – for we've prepared what we consider a fine program. To begin, the choir sings that stalwart hymn of triumph – "In the Cross of Christ I Glory."

BUSINESS: BACKGROUND: (BACKGROUND FOR POEM.)

MAC: Strickland Gillilan is perhaps best known as the author of that immortal classic whose closing lines the whole world has repeated millions of times – "Off agin, on agin, gone agin – Finnigan." But he has also written many fine poems in a more serious vein – one of which I'd like to read for you now. It's entitled "Before You Forget."

"She came from God," his mother said.
The three-year toddler bowed his head
Above his newborn sister there
To breathe this wish – more like a prayer:
"You are just from God – you remember Him yet;
Please tell me about Him before you forget!"

'Twas a childish whim, yet it made me wink
The quick tears back; for I could but think
How much of the God stamped on its heart
We take from a child at the very start
By stifling its bent toward frankest truth
And teaching it guile in its tenderest youth.

"Except ye become" – Christ must have felt
As the three-year old who gravely knelt
And asked, in his sister's wee pink ear,
The question I'm echoing now and here;
"You are just from God – you remember Him yet!
Please tell me about Him, for fear I forget."

BUSINESS: BACKGROUND: "THE LORD'S PRAYER."

MAC: And now, in answer to your many requests, Bruce Foote sings again "The Lord's Prayer."

BUSINESS: BRUCE AND CHOIR: "THE LORD'S PRAYER."

BUSINESS: BACKGROUND: "IN THE GARDEN."

MAC: And now, one of the greatest hymns ever written – a favorite of all our listeners. . . .

"I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses. . . ."

BUSINESS: CHOIR: "IN THE GARDEN."

MAC: We're always pleased to receive your letters that tell us how much you like this program . . . we're glad it brings a little welcome interlude in a busy day.

ANNOUNCER: CLOSING COMMERCIAL.

BUSINESS: THEME . . . FADE.

MAC: Our time is almost up, and we reluctantly near the close of another "Hymns of All Churches" broadcast. But we're happy in the thought that we'll be back with you tomorrow at this same time, and when I tell you that we're going to sing the Lenten favorite, "Christian, Dost Thou See Them," and the gospel hymn, "Shadows," I'm sure you'll want to be on hand. And if any of you can arrange to be present here tomorrow at our NBC Studios in the Merchandise Mart, Chicago, we'll see that you get a warm welcome.

BUSINESS: THEME UP AND FADE BEHIND.

ANNOUNCER: The past hour of entertainment has come to you with the good wishes of General Mills, creators of new foods and new ideas for a better world.

BUSINESS: THEME UP AND OUT.

CHAPTER 9

WRITING TALKS PROGRAMS

The basic elements of a good style apply to a speech written for the radio just as they do to a speech written for a visible audience. There are, however, certain important differences between the two situations which have a profound influence on certain characteristics of the style of each. Any public speaker recognizes the necessity of adapting himself to his audience. He will adopt one approach to a hostile audience; he will take quite a different approach to a sympathetic audience. This adjustment must be carried over into the writing of radio speeches.

Because radio is a blind medium, it eliminates many avenues to the minds of an audience. Gestures, movements about the platform, even the appearance of the speaker and his attitude, are all negated when he speaks over the air. Obviously, an abnormal load is placed on his voice and on his ability to convey with his inflections exactly what he means.

Even more important is the difference in the audience situation. An experienced public speaker nearly always begins his speech by an attempt to polarize his audience. His job is to make of them a psychological unit, so that they will react, not as individuals but as a group. To this end he not only takes advantage of mob psychology, but also uses all the tricks of social pressure and all the polarizing devices at his command.

The speaker over the radio is denied this privilege. His audience is not a group of people, but a large collection of individuals. It is in fact an audience of one or two people, and such an audience cannot be made into a psychological unit. The radio speaker, therefore, must speak as man to man. The ideas move directly from the speaker to a single person. The fact that this line from speaker to a single listener is multiplied many thousands of times does not alter the fact that the speech is still a person-to-person affair. The listener in his home need not be aware that thousands of others are listening. If he is at all interested in the speech, his concern is limited to himself and to the speaker. This attitude necessitates a personal approach on the part of the radio speaker.

He must also recognize other basic facts about his audience. There are no social pressures to keep his audience listening. It takes a strong-willed person to get up in a lecture hall and walk out. Social pressure or sheer physical obstruction keeps him in his seat. A bored radio listener, however, has only to push the button and turn on Jack Benny. The speaker over the air cannot, then, count on any sort of pressure to keep his audience listening, except the pressure which he himself can exert. That pressure consists of the interest and excitement with which the speaker can endow his subject.

Many public speakers have been deceived by the vast size of the radio audience and have used some of their best "spellbinding" tricks only to find them worthless. Mass emotional appeals do not work, because the speaker is working with individuals rather than with a mass. It is quite possible to use an emotional approach in a speech on the radio, but it must be a personal, not a group, appeal. The radio speaker must realize that he seeks an entirely different set of results from that of the public speaker with a visible audience. The speaker face to face with an audience usually tries to elicit some kind of overt reaction. He may want applause, or cheers, or laughs, or a show of hands. Any of these responses may help him to weld the audience together, to polarize them, and to get them thinking with him and reacting to him. Presumably the radio speaker also wishes to carry an audience along with him, but he cannot do it by seeking overt action. He wants conviction and direct action, but he must get his reaction in a completely different way.

Writing the Radio Speech

How do all these facts affect the style of a radio speech? How can they be translated into rules to guide the writer of a radio speech? What basic changes in style must be made when the writer undertakes a speech for a radio audience rather than for a visible audience?

The approach to the subject and the flavor of the speech must be extremely personal. All concepts of speaking to a group of people must be eliminated. The writer must feel that he is talking to one person face to face. He is not talking to him from a distance. He is not looking down at him from a lectern or from a platform. He is sitting in his listener's living-room, talking to him directly. Every sentence and every idea in the speech should be such that the speaker could sit down in the living-room of one of his listeners and speak each line to him directly.

It would be poor practice to start a radio speech in this way: "Good evening, friends, of my vast radio audience stretching as it does from the rock-ribbed coasts of Maine to the sunny shores of California." Such a start could hardly be called good speaking of any kind, but for the radio it is especially bad because it is not personal. Speakers would do well to emulate President Roosevelt, who usually began his speeches very simply with "My friends." The use of such phrases as "You know from personal experience . . . " or, "This same condition exists in your block . . . " help to make a radio address seem to be a person-to-person communication. Direct address is the best trick to give a speech the personal flavor it should have.

The style of a radio speech must be simple, because it must be delivered simply. Oratorical, flowery speech is out of place in a living-room. The style should resemble that of ordinary conversation, but it must not have any of the rambling faults of everyday conversation. The vocabulary and the sentences must be those that you would use in a casual conversation with your next-door neighbor. But, like all art which conceals art, it must be infinitely better. While it must be of the same quality and style, it must not have the same loose structure. This requirement takes us back to our basic elements of style: short sentences must predominate.

No matter what sins of organization and structure the speaker may commit to a visible audience, he must not make those errors in a radio speech. Face to face with his audience a speaker can tell from their expressions whether they understand him or whether he has clouded an issue. This advantage is denied a radio speaker. His only defense against misunderstanding is to organize his speech so clearly and to make his explanation so simple and so obvious that his audience cannot fail to understand. The speech should be organized around a few simple, easily stated topics which can be discussed concisely. The skeleton of a radio speech may to good advantage stand out much more clearly than a speech to a visible audience. Do not be afraid to let your radio audience get point number one, point number two, and point number three. Remember that the ear has a short memory; while it listens to one point, it is likely to forget the point which it has just heard. This limitation necessitates extremely clean organization and a completely clear relationship of one point to another. A certain amount of repetition is not only permissible – it is good. If the reader remembers his own listening habits, he knows how easy it is to be distracted. If the speaker has made an important point and gone on without further reference to it, a gap in the speaker's train of thought is left which the listener can never fill. Repetition and reiteration of organization helps the listener to follow the speaker in spite of distractions.

If the contents of this chapter were to be outlined for delivery in speech form over the radio, it might be arranged as follows:

WRITING A RADIO SPEECH

I. The radio-speaking situation creates certain problems.
    A. Radio is a "blind" medium.
        1. The speaker cannot depend on the standard public speaking devices of:
            a. Gestures.
            b. Movement around the platform.
            c. Facial expression.
        2. The radio speaker has at his command only:
            a. His voice.
            b. His speech content.

- B. The audience listens in small units.
    - 1. The speaker is not addressing a crowd, but units of one, two, or three.
    - 2. Crowd psychology therefore is not applicable.
- C. The audience is at home.
    - 1. Social pressure is absent.
    - 2. There are many possible distractions.
    - 3. The content and delivery of the speech must be suitable for the listener's living room.
- D. Time limits are inflexible.

II. The conditions of the radio-speaking situation govern the style of the speech.

- A. Because of a small-unit audience, the style must be personal.
- B. Because of listening at home, the style must be simple.
- C. Because the ear alone is short-memoried and because the speaker cannot see his audience to gauge their understanding, the organization of material must be very clear, logical, simple, and repetitive.
- D. Because the audience is listening *only,* there is more demand for concrete information.
- E. Because listeners may join the audience at any time during the speech, it should have a good summary.

III. Timing the speech creates certain problems.

- A. Because radio waits for no one and time is inflexible, speeches must be carefully timed.
- B. Speeches are timed in this way:
    - 1. A normal reading rate in terms of words per minute should be determined.
    - 2. Time should be allowed for announcer's introduction and closing.
    - 3. Write the last two minutes in short "takes" for convenient cutting.

This outline has the merit of simplicity. There are only three major points and a summary. The first major point is set up as a premise or situation against which the rest of the outline is discussed. Notice how the sub-points under II and III constantly refer to the situation set up in I. This constant reference helps establish point I and also constantly gives reasons for the points that follow. It creates a definite structure which calls attention to itself and explains itself as the speech progresses. In a written exposition or in a talk to a visible audience, the constant cross-references might be unnecessary. For an audience that can only listen, it proves very helpful.

A radio audience likes specific information. A clever public speaker working directly to a visible audience may be utterly charming, completely disarming, and highly entertaining without saying much. Over the air generalities do not carry the weight and the punch of specific statements. Specific instead of general words should be used. Specific rather than vague ideas should be presented. And the entire content should be so designed as to make a completely clear impression on the listener's mind.

Because of the audience's habit of tuning in and out on programs, it is always well to summarize the points during the progress of a speech. A speaker may gain and lose several thousand listeners during a fifteen-minute talk. If the talk is well done and on a subject of wide interest, it may be possible to hold many of the casual tuners-in. But it must be remembered that many of this audience tune in "in the middle." Therefore, the radio speaker should always try to make a definite and concise summary of his talk in the last few seconds.

Like everything else in radio, the speech must be timed. Every speaker should time his speech and hold himself rigidly to the time allotted. When a radio speech is billed for twelve minutes, it gets twelve minutes and no more. This rigidity necessitates an accurate timing of a speech.

Whether you are writing a radio speech to deliver yourself or preparing a speech for someone else, you should know the approximate speed at which the copy will be read. A slow rate of speech is about 125 words per minute; average speech will use about 160 words per minute; rapid speech may use 200. With this rough timing in mind, a speech can be fashioned to meet approximately the time limit assigned. However, public speakers, especially inexperienced ones, are notorious for their apparent genius at changing their normal pace when they speak over the air. Furthermore, there is no way of predicting how that pace will change. Some people speed up. Others slow down. Any speaker is likely to vary his time either way. For this reason it is always well to have a little optional copy toward the close of a radio speech. The last two or three paragraphs preceding a summary might be written so that each of them will take approximately fifteen or thirty seconds. Three such paragraphs will allow from forty-five seconds up to a minute and a half of material which can be used or omitted, according to the pace which the speaker takes. Any such adjustments should be planned for the time just preceding the summary. The summary itself should not be changed because of time factors.

Most fifteen-minute programs on the air are allowed fourteen and one-half minutes. Suppose that thirty seconds are spent in introducing the speaker and another thirty seconds in identifying him at the close. The speaker himself will thus have a total of thirteen and a half minutes. Having made this approximate timing, he must then make an exact timing of the conclusion. Suppose this takes exactly one minute to read. He knows that he must start reading his conclusion twelve minutes and thirty seconds after the program starts. By watching the studio clock and by keeping an eye on his copy, he can easily tell how much or how little of his optional material he can use just preceding the conclusion. By this simple means it is possible to time a radio speech accurately and make proper allowance for any change in rate of delivery.

Let us summarize the points to remember in writing a radio talk:

1. There must be a real purpose behind the talk.
2. The content must have general interest and appeal.
3. It must be written in conversational style.
4. It must be written in simple language — no four- and five-syllable words.

5. The sentence structure must be simple.
6. It must be written to inform, not to impress.
7. It must catch the attention immediately, or else the whole purpose of the talk is lost.
8. Contractions and colloquialisms help to make a speech sound conversational.
9. The script must be timed carefully; the conclusion left intact and provisional cuts made just preceding it.

The following script is fairly typical and a rather good example of a radio talk which embodies some of the principles discussed here. This talk was one of a series which preceded the annual income-tax collection. The subject is particularly difficult, because it is fraught with confusion and because the audience takes the attitude that it will be unpleasant but probably good for them to listen to it. In the face of these odds, a lucid and interesting speech has been written.

Such a subject would tempt almost anyone to verbosity and technical language. The reader will find not one strange word in paragraph 1. Notice in paragraph 5 and again in paragraph 7 the use of direct address. The organization is simple and clear. Various kinds of deductions are taken up in turn and disposed of as simply as possible. The whole style is simple, unassuming, and still manages to throw considerable clarity on a universally confusing subject. Notice how special terminology is either avoided or carefully explained in the simplest terms.

Since a summary is difficult on such a subject, it has been omitted, but the reader will notice that two short paragraphs, 12 and 13, are provided to allow for time variance. Either of these could be omitted without seriously damaging the body of the talk. Here is how it looked on paper minus the opening and closing announcement:

> 1. In the series of short talks we have been giving during recent weeks, we have stressed the point that this year's income-tax return was unlike previous years' returns. We attempted to show how, on this year's return, we joined the tax

liability for 1943 with the tax liability for 1942, and deducted therefrom all payments and credits applicable to either year. In that way we arrived at the balance of tax or amount of refund that would serve to balance the books for the two years.

2. Today we shall get back to fundamentals for a few minutes. Many taxpayers are filing for the first time, and a very important question to them is, "How much can I deduct?"

3. And that is a very fair question.

4. In fact, Collector Harrison, of this district, is every bit as emphatic in emphasizing the allowance of legitimate deductions as he is insistent on the collection of all legitimate taxes.

5. You will notice, upon referring to the long Form Number 1040, that we must distinguish between deductions and credits. We speak of earned income credit and credit for dependents, but when we mention deductions, we mean such items as go to decrease one's gross income so as to arrive at the figure known as net income.

6. Deductions most commonly known to most of us are such items as contributions, interest, taxes, losses from casualty, and medical expenses. The income tax law, as passed by Congress, must be consulted to get a definition for each term, for the common everyday dictionary definition will not always be applicable when speaking in terms of income tax.

7. Take contributions, for instance. You and I know that the everyday definition of this word is something like "money you give away without expecting to get anything back for it." Well, you cannot always deduct on your income-tax return for contributions of that kind. For instance, you can give a dollar to the man on the corner every day of the year, but you cannot deduct a cent of that kind on your income-tax return. In order to take advantage of "contributions," you must be in a position to supply reasonable proof that you have made some donation, not to an individual, but to an *organization* whose chief function is some public good; and that organization must be a domestic organization as distinguished from a foreign organization. Religion, education, science, civic betterment, are all examples of what is meant by "some public good."

8. You all know what is meant by "interest." If you borrow money you pay some small sum for the use of it. If you pay interest, for any purpose, you may deduct that amount from your income for that year in which you paid the interest.

9. Taxes do cause a little confusion. To determine that they are deductible, you must fit them into the situation where you can say that, by law, the particular tax was levied against you, and you did pay it during the year in which you earned that income. Taxes which are levied against someone else, by law, and are then passed on to you as an additional charge, generally speaking, are not deductible by you.

10. Losses from casualty or theft cover a large field, but this deduction most seldom appears on the return of the average taxpayer. To be deductible, the loss must have occurred through no fault of the taxpayer. If the loss is in order, then the reasonable market value of the lost or damaged article is deductible.

11. Medical and dental expenses. This is the newest of the deductions. It is self-explanatory and Schedule H on the income tax return prevents you from going astray. Remember you may deduct only such medical and dental expenses as exceed five per cent of your net income for the year. And when we say net income, we mean your total income less all of your deductions except medical and dental expenses.

12. We agree, this is a very brief summary of this subject. However, with a little thought on your part, your tax problem will give you very little trouble.

13. However, if this or any other phase of the income-tax subject has you confused, do not hesitate to contact us at any of our offices.

Thank you.

The Interview

There are five basic types of interview programs which are commonly used. Each one serves a specific purpose and is designed to fulfill certain basic audience interests. The writer who designs interview programs should be familiar with their purpose before he attempts to write one.

An interview of celebrities is the most familiar of this type of program. The celebrity may be anyone from a current movie star to a visiting statesman. Usually, such interviews are a two-man job, with a staff announcer acting as host and putting questions to the celebrity.

A second type of interview is the so-called "feature" interview. The interviewee, who is often an unknown or little known individual, is put on the air because of the human interest which may be inherent in him or in his job. The station may interview a man who has an odd or unusual job, or a person who is currently in the news. Sometimes people are chosen as representative citizens and interviewed with the idea of trying to crystallize the thinking of the "man-in-the-street" on current topics. In such broadcasts the form is usually the same as in the celebrity interview. The difference is in the authority or in the frame of the interviewee, and in the difference in human interest which the interviewees present to an audience.

Man-in-the-street interviews have been extremely popular. The programs are usually spontaneous, catch-as-catch-can interviews with whoever happens to come along. Usually one of two approaches is taken. It may be a serious attempt to arrive at a cross-section of interests and attitudes, or it may be designed to achieve a comedy effect. In the latter case random passers-by may be waylaid and submitted to a battery of foolish questions to which they are supposed to give answers. Such a program often manages to make either the announcer or the person interviewed appear very funny. Sometimes the comic effect is planned in one way and sometimes in another, but a spontaneous kind of humor is always hoped for.

A few interviews furnish specific information. In these the interview technique is used to make exposition more palatable. A staff announcer often interviews an authority in a field about which the station feels that a broadcast should be designed. Such an interview might be held with the head of the local Community Chest or the American Red Cross. The purpose obviously is to instruct or to inform the audience, with the interview technique used merely as an alternative to the straight talk. Actual courses of instruction have been broadcast in which either the announcer or some other individual acts as student or stooge and an authority acts as informant. Usually this device is so obvious that it is only slightly better than a straight talk.

The last type is the group interview. An announcer or some member of the station staff interviews a group of people. Suppose, in a war information program, the station is trying to show the audience what is going on in the minds of war workers in a certain plant. Half a dozen representative workers might be called in and an interview program set up, some member of the station personnel acting as questioner of the group. Usually the program attempts to crystallize the information which the group has to offer. It is one way of getting a cross-section of public reaction.

There is considerable difference of opinion about the relative interest of the interview program. Most directors feel that an interview is more interesting than a straight talk. In the first place, it has at least an illusion of spontaneity, which is more convincing than a straight talk. In the second place, it is less formal; therefore, the plowing along a predetermined line is less likely to be obvious. Again, the fact that there are two voices instead of one tends to provide a certain amount of vitality and variety. All these points are in the favor of the interview method.

Its most dangerous weakness is its apparent ease. Too many interviews are broadcast with little or no previous planning, with the result that no specific content is covered, no specific objectives are achieved, and the audience is left with the feeling that nothing of importance has been said. However, there is a definite inherent interest in the interview method which can be capitalized upon, provided the program is well planned and well executed.

The mechanics of the interview program offer an interesting set of problems to the radio writer. Most interviews are built around three main techniques. First, a script may be written complete with questions and answers. Secondly, a script may be written for the interviewer with ad-libbed answers from the interviewee. Finally, the whole interview may be ad-libbed.

The writing of a complete interview script is a difficult assignment. If the writer also happens to be the interviewer, the problem is somewhat simplified. In any event, the writer is responsible for putting words into someone else's mouth. This is possible only when there is plenty of time to chat with the interviewee and get a definite idea of what he has to offer. Under these circumstances the writer should listen to the speech pattern of the interviewee and try to approximate that pattern in the copy which he writes.

The interview that is completely written is often a dull and wooden affair, even when a good script is provided. The interviewee may be a celebrity, but he is seldom a radio artist. He is, therefore, rarely skillful at reading a script. He will tend to sound "ready," labored, and somewhat artificial. If the celebrity is a trained speaker who is used to speaking in public and used to handling interviews, he may do a very creditable job on prepared copy.

Even with all its disadvantages, there are some cases in which the completely prepared interview is the only possible way to handle the material. It may be so complex, the explanations so complicated, or so important, that they would be dangerous if handled in ad-libbed answers. An example is that of an important subject in which an unfortunate wording might mean disastrous results either to the interviewee or to the station. The only safe way to handle such subjects is by writing the interview completely. The writer may have to pay the penalty of a certain amount of woodenness and lack of spontaneity in order to be sure that the content is absolutely correct. If the interviewee can read copy easily and interestingly, the worst feature of the completely written interview can be eliminated.

The wholly spontaneous interview is usually successful only when the announcer is an unusually poised person. However, this does not concern the writer.

Probably the best type of interview program is that in which the interviewer works from a script and the interviewee ad-libs his answers. This form controls the organization, it assures the announcer that all the important points will be covered, it gives direction and progress to the interview, and still makes it sound fairly spontaneous. Presumably the announcer can read copy so that it will sound spontaneous. The interviewee, who is unlikely to be able to read copy skillfully, is allowed to ad-lib. If the questions which are directed at him are skillfully conceived, they may keep him from rambling. If such a program as this can be rehearsed in advance, it can be satisfactory and combine the virtue of control that the written script gives with the spontaneity of the ad-libbed program. Such a program can be prepared quickly; there is less writing and less necessity to conform to a strange speech pattern. Such a program is also easy to time and to produce, and presents no great problem in airing.

From what has been said, it may seem that writing an interview is not much of an assignment. In reality the fact that so little is written places a heavy burden on the writer. He must know something about the subject to be discussed. It may be completely new to him. Writing pointed, leading questions which will draw out an authority requires considerable artistry and knowledge of the subject. One cannot ask intelligent questions about a subject on which one is ignorant. Therefore, the first obligation of the writer is to find out enough about the subject so that he can decide what would be likely to interest his audience. He can then begin to formulate questions to draw out that information from the interviewee.

The writer's second obligation is to know something about the interviewee. In the celebrity type of program the subject matter is really the life and work of the interviewee himself. It is impossible to know what material is available until something is known of the life and work of the man to be interviewed. The questions which are finally chosen for the script are designed to draw out the information which the writer's research both on the subject and the person interviewed shows to be available and likely to provide the real interest of the broadcast.

If the writer has a chance to chat with the authority or celebrity before writing the script (and this should always be done whenever possible), he should keep an eye open for personal idiosyncrasies, amusing incidents, and personality traits on which to hang interesting or amusing facts about either the person or his subject.

Once the writer has made some preliminary investigation into the subject, and once he knows something about the interviewee, he is ready to write his continuity, whether it be only questions for the announcer or a complete script.

An interview should be as carefully and as accurately constructed as in a well-made play. Its organization must be compact, exact. It must follow the normal procedure of climactic order. Some suggestions for the organization of the interview program might be in order.

To begin with, get off to a fast start. Use some startling statement or some startling question, if one is available and is legitimate copy. If this is not suitable, look for some humorous incident or idea which will catch the fancy of your audience. Do not be guilty of a stereotyped opening to an interview. Remember you win or lose a good segment of your audience in the first sixty seconds. Therefore, some of your best planning should center about that critical period. Almost any device which is guaranteed to elicit interest and which does not violate the spirit of the program would be legitimate.

Suppose, for example, an interview program started off like this:

> Good evening. Tonight I want you to meet a Robinson Crusoe, 1945 style. It's Staff Sergeant James Robinson of the Army Air Corps. Tell me, Sergeant Robinson, how does it feel to be cast away on a desert island?

An audience that had any interest at all in this general topic would probably keep listening to find out what was coming. An interview with Ralph Edwards, of *Truth or Consequences* fame, might start out like this: "Ralph, I suppose you've done more insane things to more sane people than any other man on earth." An audience with normal curiosity would listen to see what came of that statement.

The next job is to organize the coverage of your material. All the headings or topics for the interview should be before you in outline form when you start to write. A fixed time should be allotted for the discussion of each point. The questions which make transitions from one point to another should be so worded that the audience knows exactly when one part of the subject is being closed and a new part opened. See that you have a climax. It is easy to fall from the interesting to the commonplace to the dull. An interview, like any other broadcast, should conform to the rules of good showmanship.

Using our mythical Air Corps Sergeant as an example, suppose we outline the questions which will constitute the script for the early part of the interview. Carrying on from the opening referred to earlier, the questions might run something like this:

> Sergeant, suppose you tell our listeners what your job is.
>
> Where were you when this adventure of yours began?
>
> All right. The question everyone wants to ask about now is . . . How did you come to be cast away on a desert island? (Two minutes for this.)
>
> How long were you on this island? (Two seconds for this.)
>
> Well, suppose you pick up your story from the time you crawled ashore and tell us what you did. (Four minutes for this.)
>
> I suppose you could write a book about those sixty-seven days, couldn't you, Sergeant? Perhaps some day you will, eh? Well, before this story gets too far along, we all want to know how you were rescued. (? minutes for this.)

And thus, through a series of questions, the time is allotted to the various parts of the narrative and the most interesting part saved for the climax.

How does one achieve a climax in an interview? There are several ways of solving that problem. The simplest solution, as in the example above, is to save the most interesting and the most exciting material for the last point if it can be done logically. It is even permissible to change the order from the strictly logical or chronological one of ascending interest, with the most interesting incident at the close. However it is managed, the curve of interest should be high at the beginning;

then it may possibly drop slightly for a running start on the program; if possible, build steadily from that point to the end of the program. That should represent the highest point of interest.

Plan your close in advance; otherwise your interview may sound as though it were chopped off at the end. Plan a summary if possible. In order to achieve a really good tag line, write it long before broadcast time. If nothing else in an interview is written, this part should be. It is always obligatory to thank the participants and to take care of all the usual courtesies, although these need not be done in a stereotyped, formalized manner. This part of the program, however, should be just as interesting as any of the rest. Finally, enough time should be planned for the body of the program, so that this well-organized close is assured of its allotment.

Here are some specific techniques which may help the writer of the interview program. It is well to remember that the announcer is the more experienced broadcaster of the two on the program. Therefore, in the way you write your script you should give him the responsibility for the broadcast. He should be the person who attends the starting and the closing of the program. His should be the responsibility of closing one part of the subject and opening another and of making transitions. It is always wise to let the announcer carry the ball for the first few seconds until the interviewee has his bearings. The first questions should be easy and specific so that "second-nature" answers will result. This device serves two useful purposes. In the first place, it gives the audience the basic background information which they need in order to enjoy or understand the program. In the second place, it gives the interviewee easy short questions which can be answered without any effort and lets him get his air-legs. The ease with which he answers completely routine questions will build his confidence and help him over any nervousness he might feel at the beginning.

Although the announcer is the more experienced broadcaster on the program, the interviewee is the star. As soon as possible in your script, push the announcer into the background and bring the guest into the foreground. Attention can be focused on the guest by gradually asking more complex questions that call for fuller answers. Questions should be designed to draw from the guest a discussion or a story, not a "That's-right" response.

"I understand that you've spent a good many years in Russia as American consul, Mr. Doakes." What can a poor guest answer to such a question (which is not really a question)? He can only mumble an agreement. The same information could better be given by the guest in answer to a question framed in this way: "Suppose you tell our listeners, Mr. Doakes, how you came to be so tremendously interested in Russian affairs."

Questions should be designed to elicit specific, not rambling answers. The question itself must, therefore, be specific. If the interviewer asks his guest, "What do you think of the Russian people?" he would probably get a general, loosely formed statement. On the other hand, if the announcer asks, "How well educated are the Russian people, measured by American standards?" a guest who was really well informed and knew the answer would respond with information.

The style throughout must be informal, spontaneous, and conversational. Copy must not become technical or statistical. If technical or statistical matter is inherent in the subject, it must be translated into laymen's language. Statistics should be stated comparatively in terms that will have meaning for the average listener. If, for example, an interviewee states that the war will cost the American people fifty-two and a half billion dollars next year, the immensity of the figure says only that it is a huge amount. However, if he says that it will cost one thousand dollars every minute of every hour of every twenty-four-hour day for the entire year, the figure is reduced to terms which the listener can understand.

Finally, the writer should make the style of the copy suit the position and prestige of the interviewee. This may vary somewhat, depending on the social, financial, or intellectual status of the guest. It may range all the way from rather formal conversation to hilarious give-and-take ribbing. The style of writing should be similar to the normal conversation of the guest, and certainly the spirit in which the script compels the announcer to work should be appropriate both to the guest and the subject. The free-and-easy chatter which might be suitable for the current baseball star would hardly be appropriate for the president of a large university.

Following these simple, basic suggestions will help to make the script of an interview specific, well organized, interesting, and informative. Only if thought and care are put into the planning of an interview program can it reach its highest entertainment value and usefulness.

Round-table programs, forum programs, and other types depending primarily on talk or conversation for their content, have little interest for the radio writer. In nearly all of them the actual writing is done by the participants, who are also the authorities on the subjects discussed. A continuity writer might, however, write the introductions and conclusions and the proper credits. Any radio writer should be familiar with the basic rules governing the form of such programs.[1] There are rare cases in which the radio writer may ghost-write material for one or more of the authorities. This is a specialized job and should not really be considered as continuity writing. In such cases the writer gives up his own identity to furnish material for another person who will probably use it as his own.

The whole secret of writing a good talk or a good interview program is to realize the difficulty of the problem. Unfortunately, the general attitude toward interview programs seems to be that all one has to do is to go on the air, ask a few questions, get a few answers, and doodle for thirteen and a half minutes. As a result, nobody listens long to such badly managed programs. Only by careful planning and by the working-out in detail of the entire program can successful talk and interview programs be produced.

The sample interview program that follows is printed in its entirety in order to give the beginner an idea of how some of these problems can be worked out in detail. The program itself is probably one of the most difficult of its kind. In the first place, it is an interview with not one but several people. In the second place, one of those people is halfway around the world and must be interviewed by short wave. Finally, and most important, the subject matter is so touchy and so important that careless handling of it might endanger the war effort.

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[1] For a complete discussion of this subject see Judith Waller, *Radio: The Fifth Estate,* chapters III and IV.

For easy reference, the paragraphs are numbered. Note how many of the principles discussed are well illustrated in this interview. Paragraph 2 does the briefest possible job of setting forth the purpose and manner of the broadcast. In the same paragraph the participants are all named and identified.

Notice how in paragraph 4 and the one which follows, mention is made of a special announcement, calculated to keep the audience interested. Having capitalized on it, it is promptly shunted aside in paragraph 6 to be held for a more climactic point in the broadcast. It is, if you please, teaser advertising in ideas.

The style of the broadcast is simply set in paragraph 5. There are no big words. There is no undue pomp. It gets down to business, simply and directly.

The questions asked in paragraph 14 practically dare any American to leave his radio. Those questions are challenging. To ask them right in the teeth of the department accused will probably guarantee audience interest. It is also an excellent method of insuring that the desired information is brought out.

Paragraph 16 is a good example of a question that would be hard to answer by a simple yes or no. It demands supporting material. That support takes time and makes the guest the center of attention and the dispenser of information. Notice, too, in paragraph 18 how definite the question is. This could not elicit a vague or rambling answer.

Now look at paragraph 26. One phase of the interview is done. It is time to bring in the next guest. See how succinctly it is done? There is no waste of time. A simple sentence thanks the participant, and the next one is identified immediately. Paragraph 28 is weak. The question is too general. It would never have been permitted if this had not been a completely written script. However, since the answer was written, it serves as a general springboard for the discussion which follows.

Paragraph 30 is a good example of simple, spontaneous style, even in the presence of a dignified guest. Paragraphs 31 through 34 are a prepared speech and frankly come out as such. The interview technique is abandoned for the moment in favor of getting over a definite set of acts and to avoid the difficulties of transatlantic two-way discussion.

Notice how the questions in paragraphs 39 through 48 introduce the next guest and draw forth the background information which the audience must have if the announcements are to have their full value. Paragraphs 48 and 49 suggest that the program has reached its first climax – a new announcement.

In the announcements made in paragraph 53, there is some chance of misunderstanding. Notice how this difficulty is immediately overcome by the question voiced in paragraph 54.

The student might wonder why a matter such as that introduced in paragraph 71, which is obviously history past and done, should be placed in the climactic spot on the broadcast. Why not the new announcement just made? The answer is that General Clark's pants may not be as important to the future of the State Department as the new committees, but they have a great deal more human interest. Notice how, in paragraph 73, the interviewer wheels back to them again. Interest, which may have lagged a little in the rather technical announcement, just preceding this, now picks up. The audience begins to listen more intently.

In order to keep this whole sequence of questions from running away with the program requires a strong, pointed question to bring it back to serious matters. Paragraph 79 does this admirably. The same kind of direct challenge appears in the question in paragraph 89. Both are excellent. They seem to put the interviewee in a difficult spot, but of course what they really do is to give him an excellent springboard for the desired information.

Rather obviously, the planned part of the broadcast was over after paragraph 93. However, a little time was left. Since the program had been carefully built, provision had been made for just this eventuality. The result is a smooth inclusion of the material in paragraphs 94 and 96. This backlog of material solved the timing problem and put the program into the carefully planned closing copy of paragraph 97.

January 15, 1944

Participants

Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.	Under Secretary of State
G. Howland Shaw	Assistant Secretary of State
John G. Winant	United States Ambassador to London (speaking from London)
Robert D. Murphy	United States Ambassador at Large; American member of the Advisory Council for Italy
Richard Harkness	Representing the public

Washington Announcer: For the American people, the National Broadcasting Company presents the second of a limited series of programs called "The State Department Speaks." We go now to the State Department Building on Pennsylvania Avenue here in Washington, D.C.

1. Harkness: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. This is Richard Harkness – your representative in this timely series of programs designed to tell you something about your State Department – how it works, the work it does, and the people who run it. Here in the Secretary of State's office on the second floor of the old State Department Building, I am ready to interview for you such well-known people as Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., Under Secretary of State; G. Howland Shaw, Assistant Secretary of State; John G. Winant, American Ambassador to Great Britain, who will speak to us from London; and Ambassador Robert D. Murphy, who has just returned to this country from some very exciting experiences abroad.

2. To begin with, thanks to you listeners for your cards and

letters suggesting questions I should ask on these programs. They've been most helpful. Keep them coming!

3. Now let's try getting some of your questions answered. First, those questions having to do with the set-up of the State Department and its work. And here are two men who can speak with authority — Under Secretary Stettinius and Assistant Secretary Shaw.

4. Mr. Stettinius, I understand you have something interesting to tell us tonight concerning two important anouncements which Secretary Hull made today.

5. STETTINIUS: Yes, Mr. Harkness, I have.

6. HARKNESS: Good! But before we go into that, I'd like to get a brief picture of the State Department's work. Mr. Shaw, you're the Assistant Secretary of State in charge of the administration of the Department and of our Foreign Service. Suppose you give us that picture, sir.

7. SHAW: In brief, Mr. Harkness, the business of the State Department is to represent this country in our dealings with foreign governments in matters covering many of the most momentous problems of the day.

8. HARKNESS: Like the Moscow Conference, for instance?

9. SHAW: Yes — and such things as the negotiation of bases for our armed forces, the conclusion of many treaties and commercial agreements. But in addition the State Department does a great deal of work having little or nothing to do with foreign governments. Actually, most of our daily business is with Americans who come in to ask us to do all sorts of things for them. We maintain daily contacts with Congress and keep in touch with American public opinion as a whole. Furthermore, normally a large part of our work is with other departments of our Government; for instance, getting information on foreign markets which the Department of Commerce distributes to American businessmen; getting data on foreign labor conditions for the use of our Labor Department; getting information abroad for the use of our Agriculture Department to be used in World-crop forecasting. Today we work especially closely with these departments and other agencies of the Government in economic-postwar work, the acquisition of needed materials from abroad, and a multitude of other activities.

10. Harkness: Well, I suppose it is the State Department Foreign Service that actually carries out many of these jobs in foreign countries.

11. Shaw: That's right. But it's called the Foreign Service of the United States and *not* the Foreign Service of the Department of State. Our Foreign Service officers receive their commissions, not from the Secretary of State, but from the President of the United States. They serve the Government of the United States as a whole. These men are the eyes and ears of our Government in foreign lands, the advocates of its interests, and the interpreters of its ideals.

12. Harkness: Serving our country abroad would seem to me to require a pretty able American.

13. Shaw: It certainly does. Our work today demands able men with many different skills — men with many kinds of experience. Their war-time duties were particularly exacting as I'm sure Ambassador Winant and Ambassador Murphy will tell you later.

14. Harkness: All right. Now, Mr. Shaw, many of our listeners have sent questions asking whether to get a job in our Foreign Service you have to come from the so-called "right" social background, have the right-size bank account, have gone to the right schools, and be a native of the eastern section of the United States. Is there any truth in that, Sir?

15. Shaw: No, there is not. Let me answer you point by point, Mr. Harkness, and with concrete facts. Let's start with that eastern seaboard myth. Of the last three groups of 117 persons to enter the Foreign Service, 19 came from the Far West; 33 from the Middle West; 16 from New England; 33 from the Middle Atlantic States, and 16 from the South. So you see they were pretty well scattered geographically throughout the country. And that's true not only of the last three groups to enter the Service but of the men who came in during the past 10 years. Moreover, these men came from not just one or two schools, but from over 50 different universities and colleges. And — so far as earlier schooling was concerned — at least half of them received their education in our public high schools. Many of our men have worked their way through school. One young man who entered the Foreign Service recently, prepared for his examinations by studying nights in the

Detroit Public Library. To support himself he worked during the day on the assembly line of an automobile plant.

16. Harkness: That's interesting and good to hear. But, Mr. Shaw, how about the general opinion that a man needs a private income and — well — the so-called "right" kind of social background to enter the Foreign Service?

17. Shaw: Neither one of these statements is true, Mr. Harkness. The vast majority of men in the Foreign Service today have no independent income whatever and must rely entirely on their government pay. Now about this "social background" business. The truth is that we want the Service to be broadly representative of American life. I can answer that question again in terms of the last groups of new men to enter our Foreign Service: The fathers of these young men followed such varied occupations as railroad conductor, carpenter, minister of religion, schoolmaster, banker, jeweler, laborer, lawyer, sales manager, clerk, and physician.

18. Harkness: Well, that list seems to spike another rumor, Mr. Shaw. But how did you go about selecting Foreign Service officers?

19. Shaw: Through a good stiff examination.

20. Harkness: Just how tough is it?

21. Shaw: Well, only about one out of seventeen passes the test. If they've got the stuff, we want them in the Foreign Service. If they haven't got the stuff, we don't want them, no matter what else they have — money, degrees, or name.

22. Harkness: That's good American doctrine.

23. Shaw: Yes, and it results in giving us men who are a cross-section of all America, and that's *just* what we're after.

24. Harkness: Before we went on the air, Mr. Shaw, you said something about not doing any recruiting for the Foreign Service just now because the men you would want are going into the armed services. What are your plans for the future on this?

25. Shaw: I am glad you brought that up, Mr. Harkness, because just as soon as the war is over we will be needing new men in the Service and we will look first to the returning soldiers to fill our ranks.

26. Harkness: Thank you, Mr. Shaw. Right now I want to call in London to ask one of our most distinguished ambassa-

dors abroad to tell us something about his job of representing 130 million people. Can you hear me, Ambassador Winant in London?

27. WINANT: Thank you, I can, Mr. Harkness.

28. HARKNESS: Well, to begin with, would you tell us something about your work and the people you have to work with as American Ambassador in London?

29. WINANT: It has been customary over long periods of time for governments to communicate with one another through embassies. I have charge of the United States Embassy in London. The two men I work most closely with are the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, and the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Eden. We work together as freely and as frankly as any three people can work together. There is no unnecessary formality, but always an honest effort to get the job done, whatever the job may be.

30. HARKNESS: I have a hunch that yours is a mighty tough and complex job, and I wish you could tell us briefly something about it.

31. WINANT: In wartime, with Great Britain and the United States co-ordinating production and supply and fighting under a common command, the area of coverage and the volume of business have been enormously expanded. Modern warfare, which involves entire populations of countries, has forced the establishment of civilian war agencies which are represented and co-ordinated within the London Embassy organization for the European theater of operations.

32. The backbone of the Embassy organization are the career Foreign Service officers. They are selfless, efficient, and hardworking. Aside from handling relationships between governments, our assignments include obtaining bases and other facilities for our Army and Navy, dealing with supplies through Lend-Lease and reverse Lend-Lease so that the right food and the right weapons are in the right place at the right time, whether they are to be used by our Allies' forces or our own. They include production problems and civil-use problems; economic warfare, which means finding ways and means of depriving the enemy of supplies he vitally needs; and psychological warfare, which includes laying down by leaflet and radio a barrage of truth against enemy propaganda; informa-

tion services; and other necessary activities to meet war needs.

33. There are inconveniences and some hardships, especially for those men in the Foreign Service who have been for years away from home, but there is not a man here who does not see that life lies back of the work he is doing, and is not grateful for the chance to serve the fighting men.

34. We have tried hard to be useful to the soldiers, the sailors, and the airmen who today are your true ambassadors to England, just as the true embassies are the brave homes they come from. It is on the relationship that they are building that the future of the world must largely rest.

35. A tribute in the *London Daily Express* to the American airmen who died on a recent raid over Germany will give you some understanding of the respect and friendship of the British people for our fighting men. The newspaper said:

36. "It was, alas, easy to tell yesterday where the hearts of the British people turned in regard to America – to the homes of the lost airmen from Maine to California, to the forests and the prairies, the city apartments and the homesteads in the clearings. The loss of sixty flying fortresses over Schweinfurt struck us as if it were our own. Wherefore came these gallant crews among us? Why did they wing their way to our side? These splendid young Americans flew in aid of the common cause of basic decency in the world just as their soldiers stand alongside ours in Italy or in the Solomons for no other purpose. They came on a rendezvous with us to rid the earth of Nazi terror as we shall be found shoulder to shoulder with them cleansing it of the Jap horror. That is what lasts."

37. HARKNESS: Thank you, Ambassador Winant. Good night.

38. WINANT: Good night to you all.

39. HARKNESS: And now back to the second ranking officer of the Department of State. Mr. Stettinius, you became Under Secretary of State early last fall, did you not?

40. STETTINIUS: Yes, Mr. Harkness, in October.

41. HARKNESS: And how long did it take you, sir, to find your way around in this new position? I know that, right after you took office, Secretary Hull left for the Moscow Conference, which meant that you became Acting Secretary of State right away.

42. STETTINIUS: Yes, that's right. And under very strenuous

circumstances which, I can assure you, gave me an excellent opportunity to become quickly acquainted with the work of the Department and its people.

43. HARKNESS: What were your reactions? You came into the Department as an experienced businessman and Government official, and I assume you brought a fresh viewpoint with you.

44. STETTINIUS: I came here as Under Secretary, first with a profound admiration for Secretary Hull and, secondly, with an open mind about the task ahead. It was then my judgment – it is now my definite knowledge – that the State Department is a basically sound institution. It has as its leader one of the great Americans of our time, Cordell Hull; it has an experienced and loyal staff; and it represents a country whose purposes are honorable and aboveboard. In my opinion any foreign office which possesses these assets is basically sound.

45. HARKNESS: Am I to understand then, Mr. Stettinius, that you are completely satisfied with everything about the present State Department set-up?

46. STETTINIUS: No, I am not. And I might add that neither is Secretary Hull nor our associates. Like many businesses, the State Department has had to convert its normal operations to war conditions. That always means making rapid administrative changes and the result is there are bound to be rough spots. And, to complete the circle of change, the Department must prepare itself to turn its full facilities again to the problems of peace.

47. HARKNESS: Well – Are you getting ready for that time?

48. STETTINIUS: Yes, we are. One of the first things I undertook for the Secretary was to study with Assistant Secretary Shaw and other officers how affairs within the Department should best be organized to carry the terrific load of foreign-policy work which faces us in the months and years ahead. I am very happy to say that Secretary Hull today announced a reorganization plan of the Department.

49. HARKNESS: That's just what I've been waiting for, Mr. Stettinius, since Secretary Hull stated that he had asked you to discuss some of the highlights of the plan tonight. Won't you, please, tell us a little about it?

50. STETTINIUS: Well, of course, everyone will realize that

we need as efficient and smooth-running a State Department as possible for the great tasks before us.

51. HARKNESS: Of course. What does the reorganization accomplish?

52. STETTINIUS: The new organization corrects some current difficulties, but its chief purpose is to prepare us to meet most effectively the heavy responsibilities which are ahead both for winning the war and making a secure peace.

53. The new organization accomplishes several objectives: First, it readjusts the responsibilities of the top officers of the Department so that they may devote the biggest part of their energies to vital world affairs.

54. HARKNESS: Well, you mean then they are being relieved of some of the administrative details which have tied them down up to now?

55. STETTINIUS: That's right; and, secondly, the new organization establishes clearer lines of responsibility and authority inside the Department. To do this we have revamped and regrouped many of the activities.

56. In the third place, the work of the higher officers of the Department will be more closely co-ordinated.

57. HARKNESS: Well, now, sir, is there anything you can say concretely about this?

58. STETTINIUS: Yes, one of the most important steps being taken is the establishment of two principal committees composed of high officers of the Department. Secretary Hull will be Chairman and I, Vice Chairman of these committees. One will be a Policy Committee which will be concerned with the full scope of our international affairs.

59. HARKNESS: And what is the second of these principal committees, sir?

60. STETTINIUS: That is to be called the Committee on Post War Programs. It will formulate and submit to the President recommendations pertaining to post-war foreign policy.

61. HARKNESS: That means, I take it, that all foreign-policy matters, both current and future plans, will now be cleared and co-ordinated through these two committees.

62. STETTINIUS: That is correct, but I wish to emphasize that the final important purpose of the reorganization is to establish new divisions to deal with new problems of an international nature.

63. Harkness: I notice that on the chart you have there before you, Mr. Stettinius, one of these new divisions is that of Labor Relations – would that be a concrete illustration of that last point you made?

64. Stettinius: Precisely – but with our limited time, we'd better not get started on these details here tonight, Mr. Harkness.

65. Harkness: Well, I wish we could, but I certainly want to thank you, Mr. Stettinius, for that important piece of news and your comments on its significant features. But we almost forgot to touch on that other important announcement which will be of interest to our audience.

66. Stettinius: Today Secretary Hull created an Advisory Council on Post War Foreign Policy to be composed of outstanding and representative national leaders. This Council will advise the Secretary of State on post-war foreign-policy matters of major importance.

67. Harkness: Secretary Hull has already named several outstanding citizens to serve on this Council, hasn't he?

68. Stettinius: Yes. He has appointed Mr. Norman H. Davis, Chairman of the American Red Cross; Ambassador Myron C. Taylor; and Dr. Isaiah Bowman, President of Johns Hopkins University, as Vice Chairmen of the Council.

69. Harkness: Before we tackle Ambassador Robert D. Murphy may I ask a final question, sir, on the reorganization: Will it work?

70. Stettinius: It must work, Mr. Harkness, and I can assure you that it is Secretary Hull's firm intention and mine to leave no stone unturned, as time goes on, to see that our State Department is fully equipped to discharge its responsibilities to the American people in the days ahead.

71. Harkness: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Now, ladies and gentlemen, here's Ambassador Robert D. Murphy – the man you'll remember reading about as having arranged for General Mark Clark's secret visit to North Africa before the landing of Eisenhower's armies. Mr. Murphy, can you tell us something about that visit – the time the General had the bad luck to lose those now famous pants of his?

72. Murphy: Well, a couple of weeks before our troops landed, it was decided that General Clark and several other

officers would make a secret visit to North Africa to get some first-hand ideas of what reception our forces would get from the French when they landed. We made very careful preparations with certain patriotic Frenchmen for this visit. As you all know, General Clark and his staff came ashore in the dead of night at an isolated spot and successfully completed their mission in spite of a threat of discovery by local police officials.

73. HARKNESS: Well, how about those pants?

74. MURPHY: Oh, about the pants. It was in making his get-away to the submarine that the General had to leave his pants on the beach. When we went down to remove all evidences of the visit after the General had gotten away, I found, among other things, his pants.

75. HARKNESS: What do you do with a pair of general's pants?

76. MURPHY: Just what I would have done with the pants of any other friend under similar circumstances – I had them cleaned and pressed, and radioed the General that they'd be there for him when he came back.

77. HARKNESS: And as we all know, the General did come back. But this time he had plenty of company with him – Eisenhower and his gallant armies. I would like to get from you, Mr. Murphy, some of the background of that landing. In our pre-broadcast chat, you said that during 1940, 1941, and 1942, when our military preparations needed time and our power structure was weak, you worked to inspire French faith in us. Why the lack of French faith in us then?

78. MURPHY: Because, in 1941, many Frenchmen in North Africa honestly believed that the United States would never succeed in preparing for war in time to stop Germany. We eventually got this idea out of their heads, but military preparation takes a long time and those anxious months seemed endless to us.

79. HARKNESS: The proof that you laid a firm foundation came with the successful landing of our troops in November 1942. But I recall that you were severely criticized for dealing with so-called "Vichyites" in North Africa before the invasion. Now, you know on this program there are no holds barred. I want to ask you: *Did* you deal with such people?

80. MURPHY: You bet we did, Mr. Harkness! When you're

working inside a cage with a tiger, your technique has to be quite different from that of the independent and carefree critic standing safely outside. Remember always that we were operating in a zone of strong enemy influence. It was inevitable at times that we were obliged to cultivate and associate with people for whose politics we had no sympathy. That association did not mean that we approved the point of view of certain French elements who happened to exercise authority at the time — but these Frenchmen were indispensable in preparing for the landing of our forces in Africa, and so we dealt with them. I would like to point out, however, something that has not always been clearly understood up to now and that is that certain so-called "Vichyites" remained loyal to Vichy on the surface only so they could help us in preparing the way for the arrival of our troops and the eventual liberation of France.

81. HARKNESS: That's an important point.

82. MURPHY: But in any case I will cheerfully admit that for the purpose of saving the lives of the American boys whom I saw come over the beaches of North Africa I would deal with any person desirable or undesirable. I knew that once our power was established, my Government would co-operate with the French in the re-establishment of democratic institutions. But first things come first. I knew I could not face the mothers and wives of our soldiers who might be killed by reason of any reluctance on our part which would have prevented the practical arrangements under which our soldiers were protected.

83. HARKNESS: Well, I think our listeners who have sons and brothers and husbands in the front line tonight well understand that viewpoint. What was your work after the invasion took place, Mr. Murphy?

84. MURPHY: I was then assigned to the Allied Commander in Chief, General Eisenhower, as a member of his staff.

85. HARKNESS: That was the first time that a Foreign Service officer ever became a member of a military staff, wasn't it?

86. MURPHY: I believe it was.

87. HARKNESS: Eisenhower must be a great fellow to serve with.

88. MURPHY: Indeed he is. I can't praise him too highly. His cool and sound judgment, his genial personality, were the

dominating factors behind the extraordinary co-operation between the Allies in North Africa during the most critical moments of the war.

89. HARKNESS: Mr. Murphy, I want to ask you about the Darlan affair. You remember there were a lot of people over here saying that we were backing the wrong horse after our troops had landed in dealing with Vichyite Darlan instead of Free French de Gaulle. They felt that General de Gaulle was being shunted aside, to put it bluntly.

90. MURPHY: Yes, I know about that reaction and I don't mind telling you that I was flabbergasted by it.

91. HARKNESS: You were? Why?

92. MURPHY: You must remember that the whole aim of our foreign policy in North Africa at that time was to save as many American lives as possible, and to do everything in our power to gain a quick and inexpensive victory. True, General de Gaulle was already in the war, and he and his men deserve every credit for having maintained French honor and for carrying on the fight during those bitter months. But don't forget this — at the time of the American landing, Admiral Darlan had at his command 300,000 soldiers and sailors in Africa while General de Gaulle then had only a handful by comparison. That's why we worked with Admiral Darlan. And I can tell you that he rendered very practical assistance to the Allied cause. Perhaps the best proof of this is found in the fact that, whereas our Army leaders expected the casualty list of the North African landing to run to 15,000, it actually was well under 2000, including Army and Navy.

93. HARKNESS: Well, that answers quite a few questions straight from the shoulder, Mr. Murphy. Thanks. I might point out to our listeners that Ambassador Robert D. Murphy is one of the few civilians ever to be awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. General Eisenhower pinned it on him for the excellent military job he did as head of our Foreign Service in North Africa.

94. HARKNESS: Let's see how our time is. I think we have time left for just one more question for you, Mr. Stettinius. Last week on this program we discussed the Moscow Conference, and that broadcast stirred up a large number of questions from our listeners concerning post-war co-operation with

Soviet Russia. You have been a long-standing friend of Soviet Russia, Mr. Stettinius, and you as Lend-Lease Administrator helped to get war materials to Russia. What do you think about co-operation with Soviet Russia after the war?

95. Stettinius: I have worked closely with the Soviet officials here for over three years and I have nothing but admiration for the bravery, resourcefulness, and determination of the people of the Soviet Union. I feel we have everything to gain and nothing to lose from a continuing and close co-operation between the Soviet Union and the United States both now and after the war. Anything else would be nothing less than tragic blundering for both of us.

96. Harkness: Well, time's almost up, so thanks to all of you gentlemen — Mr. Stettinius, Mr. Shaw, Ambassador Murphy, and Ambassador Winant, who burned the midnight oil in London to be with us this evening. Next week the State Department officials in the witness chair will include Mr. Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Mr. Dean Acheson — both of whom are Assistant Secretaries of State, and Mr. Harry C. Hawkins, Director of the new Office of Economic Affairs.

97. I hope all of you ladies and gentlemen listening in will be with us then. Meanwhile, send me your questions. And now — this is Richard Harkness saying "Good night" from Washington.

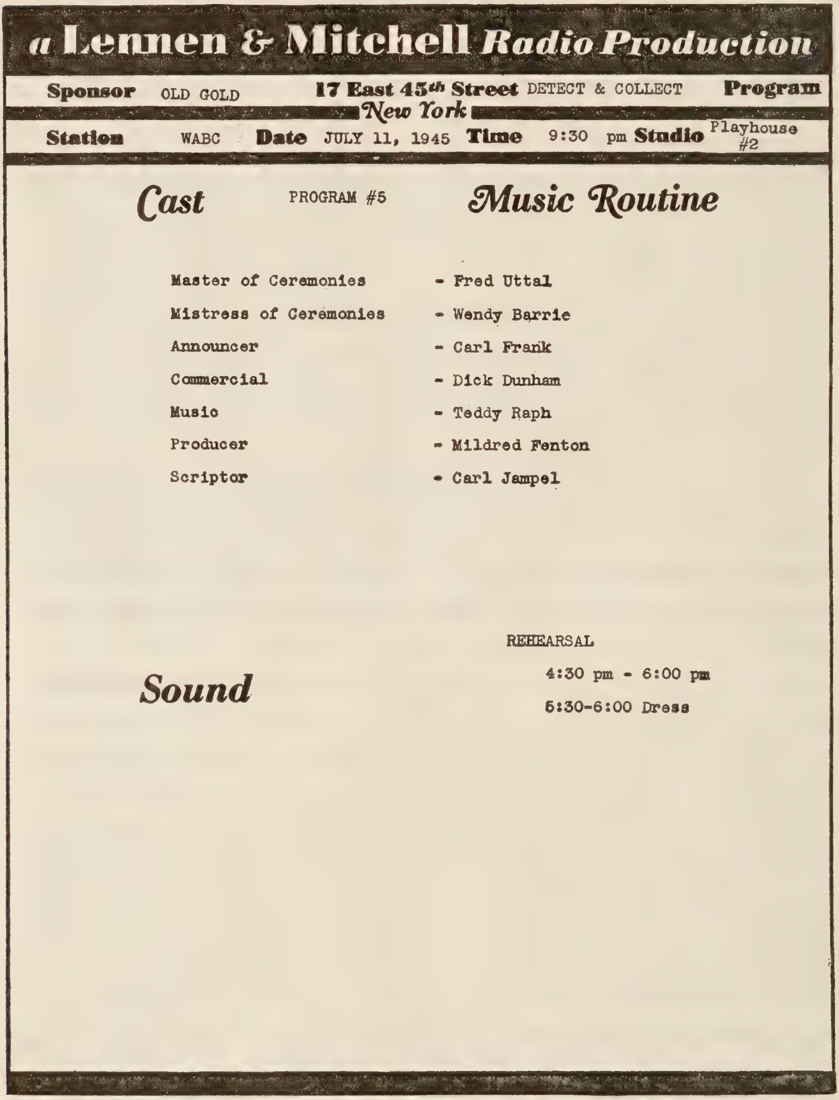
CHAPTER 10

DESIGNING AUDIENCE-PARTICIPATION PROGRAMS

In the last few years audience-participation programs have come to have an important place in radio. Almost unknown (at least under that title) a few years ago, they have zoomed in popularity until they now occupy approximately sixteen per cent of the evening time on the air. If the industry has seen fit to devote so large a percentage of its broadcast time to audience-participation programs, the beginning writer cannot afford to overlook them.

The writer's interest in these programs is fairly specialized, because little writing is involved; the problem is one of design rather than of writing or execution. This is, nevertheless, a legitimate interest, because radio writers not only do the actual writing for programs, but often also design the programs themselves.

Let us look for a moment at the elements of an audience-participation program. Although there are numerous variations of the idea, there tends to be a certain common structure in most such programs. Obviously the program must have an announcer. The announcer may do nothing but straight announcing; that is, he may do little more than open and close the program and read the commercials, if any. Such a program nearly always requires the services of a master of ceremonies, or a chairman, or a quiz-master, or a narrator, or conductor. All these terms are applied to the man around whom the audience-participation program revolves. This person and the announcer may be the same individual; more often two people are used. Next the program needs participants. These may be people who have been picked in advance. They may be commercial actors who have been planted to appear on the program, or they may be *bona-fide* contestants picked in the studio just prior to or during the broadcast. Such a program must have a studio audience. It is rare that the audience-participation show draws its contestants from the listening audience without also having a segment of that listening audience represented in the studio. One final element, some kind



a Lennen & Mitchell Radio Production

Sponsor OLD GOLD **17 East 45th Street** **New York** DETECT & COLLECT **Program**

Station WABC **Date** JULY 11, 1945 **Time** 9:30 pm **Studio** Playhouse #2

Cast PROGRAM #5 **Music Routine**

Master of Ceremonies - Fred Uttal
Mistress of Ceremonies - Wendy Barrie
Announcer - Carl Frank
Commercial - Dick Dunham
Music - Teddy Raph
Producer - Mildred Fenton
Scriptor - Carl Jampel

REHEARSAL
4:30 pm - 6:00 pm
5:30-6:00 Dress

Sound

of prize or reward for participation, may be added. Given these elements in almost any possible shading of combinations, one has the makings of an audience-participation program.

Readers will be familiar with most of the common kinds of these programs. Everyone has heard quiz programs or contests of various kinds between two competing teams of participants. The program called *Truth or Consequences* is a variation of this basic idea. There are several programs now on the air in which the master of ceremonies goes out to meet the audience in a predetermined place and has the proceedings recorded on the spot to be broadcast later at the station. Such a program is *Meet the Missus* and similar commercial participating shows. Almost any kind of program in which people are called to the studio and asked to co-operate to furnish the content of the broadcast might be called an audience-participation program. There is, however, a tendency to differentiate between this type and round-table and forum programs in which specific people who are authorities in a given field participate.

What is the basic interest behind this kind of program? What inherent human interest explains its wide popularity? In reality no one basic human interest is appealed to, but rather several. In any group no two persons may listen to the same program for exactly the same reason. The variety in appeal attracts an audience made up of many kinds and classes of people.

The common denominator in all such programs is the element of conflict. Conflict is the root of all drama. Everybody will stop to watch a dog fight. Audience-participation programs are in essence an intellectual dog fight. The conflict may occur between competing teams or between the questioner and the responder.

There is also an unspoken, but nevertheless definite, contest going on between the radio listener and the participant in the studio. Whenever a question is asked in a quiz program, members of the radio audience are trying to see if they can beat the participant to the answer. This often unconscious competition with the talent on the program lays the listener open to another appeal. Self-testing is a deep-seated urge for most of us. We like to know how we stand in comparison with other individuals. We like to take tests which check our interests, our abilities, our knowledge, our backgrounds. Many audience-participation programs furnish an excellent way for the listener to find out exactly how much he knows. Listeners like to feel that they could have done as well as, or better than, the contestants.

The element of uncertainty adds zest to audience-participation programs. There is always the chance that somebody will do something extremely funny. Even the master of ceremonies on the quiz program has no way of knowing in advance whether the responder will be able to answer his question or not. The questionee may turn on the questioner. Nobody knows in advance which side of the spelling contest is going to win. Even in programs which are "rigged" so that some knowledge of what is likely to happen may be in the hands of the production director, there is still an element of doubt in the minds of the audience.

One of the chief advantages of the audience-participation program is its low cost. The bulk of the talent is furnished free by the audience. A comparatively small number of professionals are required, and they need not be high-salaried people. Another advantage is its flexibility. Audiences can participate in programs in several dozen different ways. Many variations are already practiced, but there is no reason to believe the possibilities have been exhausted. These two factors, together with the variety of interest inherent in the program, explain its popularity.

There are, however, certain dangers in this type of program against which the writer must guard. In a program which must go on the air unrehearsed many accidents may happen. The lack of a highly organized routine may encourage both writers and production directors to go on the air with a minimum of preparation in the hope that something interesting will happen after the audience gets there. Those who produce an audience-participation show in that spirit can be reasonably sure that nothing important or funny will occur. Interest and humor do not usually appear spontaneously.

A second inherent danger is the possibility of undesirable content going out over the air. In spite of precautions, people who are unfit to appear on the air sometimes have a part in these programs. Moreover, people say unfortunate things sometimes in complete innocence. Some pitfalls can be "designed out" of a program by a skillful writer who can foresee that certain undesirable responses are possible to certain questions or situations.

A skillful design enhances the advantages of this kind of program and minimizes its dangers. Even though a large part of the show may be unrehearsed and ad-libbed, that part will be elicited by the skill with which cues, questions, and program procedure are formulated and to some extent controlled.

Much of the interest of this type of program depends on its inherent pace and the skill with which it is conducted. These are matters almost completely beyond the power of the writer, because they depend largely on the personality of the master of ceremonies or conductor of the program. Anything that can be controlled by program design might be considered as the writer's responsibility, but the performance itself must remain the responsibility of the production director and his choice of people.

So far we have chiefly considered programs in which a large percentage of the content is furnished by the participants themselves. It is possible to design a program of this kind in which a comparatively small amount of content is left in the hands of the participants, without the audience's being aware of the fact. As much as eighty per cent of the content may remain in the hands of professionals without destroying the flavor and basic human interest of audience participation. The more of the content that is actually left in the hands of professionals, while the audience feels that it is being left in the hands of the participants, the better the program is likely to be. This effect can be achieved by frequent but brief participation from the non-professional personnel of the program.

Because of its comparatively low cost and because of the small number of station staff members that need be involved in producing it, this particular program type should be used much more than it is by local and regional stations. Most of the principles that have been developed by the networks for large and fairly expensive shows could be applied with equal success on a smaller scale by a local or regional station. It would give the local audience in non-metropolitan areas the same sense of oneness with their local or regional station which metropolitan audiences feel with network programs. This kind of station awareness and good will is a valuable asset.

CHAPTER 11

WRITING THE FEATURE PROGRAM

We may define the feature program as that type which cannot be classified under any other heading. One would be fairly safe in saying that if a program is not a dramatic show, or a news program, or a public service program, or a musical program, it is probably a feature program. Actually, in the industry there is no such specific kind of program. It is a general catch-all term which is used to apply to a wide variety of programs.

Feature programs may be either commercial or sustaining. They often provide a public service. Perhaps the best way to clarify the type of program under discussion is to list a few titles of typical feature programs:

Cooking School
Reduce by Radio
Safety Court
Design for Living
Reading the Funnies
Chick Chats
Fashion Flashes
Homemaker's Program
Chicago at Night
The Answer Man
What's My Name?
Luncheon at the Waldorf
On the Assembly Line
Chats About Dogs

Titles like these could be duplicated by the dozen. They are the radio version of the feature articles in the newspapers. Many of them are programs slanted at specialized interests and comparatively small audiences. Many others are designed simply as novelty programs which refuse classification in any of the standard categories.

Such programs as these lend variety to the schedule. They break the pattern of music, news, and drama during the daytime hours, for such programs are not usually offered at night. They are planned to appeal to people with specialized interests. Built around hobbies or avocations which have a widespread following, they are used as audience builders. By getting people to listen to something in which they are especially interested, these programs may lead members of their audience to listen to other more generalized programs that precede or follow them. Many such programs have a strongly educational slant and some provide outright instruction. Others are pure entertainment and pretend to be nothing more.

Feature programs are one of the most fertile fields in which the free-lance writer can work. A writer who can create an idea for such a program has a good chance of selling it to a sponsor. There are, of course, programs of this type on the networks, but not so many as may be found on individual stations. It is obviously difficult for networks to dabble in programs that offer such specialized interest. Networks try to schedule programs of a much more general nature which will appeal to broader audiences. The local and regional stations, therefore, must meet the specialized demands of their own localities. A continuity writer who is facile in building programs of this sort is always in demand.

It is difficult to talk about the writing problems of feature programs because each by its nature tends to be different from every other kind of program on the air. Certain problems, however, are inherent in most feature programs and are, therefore, worth consideration. For instance, many deal with expository material. Exposition in itself may or may not be interesting, but it is more difficult to make palatable to a listener than content of a less demanding nature. Facts or instruction demand rather close attention, which the listener cannot always give uninterruptedly.

The diversity of types and of content invest every such program with its own particular problems. These are not always subject to solution according to general rules which have been worked out for other programs. The problems may be specific and local. They may, for example, hinge on the willingness of local groups to co-operate or on the personalities of particular people.

A great many feature programs demand considerable research. For example, most small or regional stations have some sort of homemaker's program. The content consists chiefly of household hints and ideas about improving the management of the home, of the kitchen, or of the family. These are not matters about which the average radio writer can sit down and write off the cuff. There is nothing to write about until the writer becomes a partial authority on the subject. If he is doing many other programs, he cannot afford the time to create original material for every broadcast of his feature program. As a result, he must draw heavily on available sources of material. Most of the women's magazines maintain a press service which is available to writers of programs on homemaking. All sorts of bulletin releases from food manufacturers and household editors are sent out constantly through the mails. A collection of this material will give the writer of a homemaker's program plenty to write about. This same process can, of course, be repeated in most other fields. Once the original contacts have been established, a writer will usually find himself flooded with more material than he can use. Of course, much of this material is pedestrian, unoriginal, and needs reworking. Much of the rest is completely unusable. But there will always be plenty of good material around which the writer can build his program. There are, of course, many feature programs which do not necessitate any research at all. However, since many are informational or educational in purpose, it is well to be familiar with the sources from which material can be quickly drawn.

Whenever a writer enters a new field, he must learn a new terminology. If he is going to do a gardenclub broadcast, he must not only familiarize himself with the gardener's problems, but he must also master a whole vocabulary before he can "speak their language." This example could be duplicated in almost any field in which the writer of a feature program might choose to work. Using special terminology which grows up around any subject will give a flavor of authority to a broadcast.

A few more specific examples may help the reader to understand the problems involved in writing feature programs. Recently, a continuity writer in a small station in the Middle West conceived the idea of a program built around the maternity ward in the local hospital. The writer (who also broadcast it on the air) devised each day a series of greetings to the new arrivals. Calls to all the local hospitals each morning supplied the names of the babies and their parents. These were woven into the continuity of a fifteen-minute script in which a piece of recorded music was played or a poem read and dedicated to the new arrivals. The program was clever and caught on. Soon it was bought by a local dairy company which added to the inherent interest of the program by furnishing a supply of milk free to each new arrival whose name appeared on the program. The basic idea in this case is simplicity itself. The amount of work necessary to prepare it for air each day was not great, and the degree of listener interest was reasonably high. There was also an excellent tie-up between the sponsor and the content of the program. Altogether it made an interesting and successful feature program.

For the young radio writer just starting his career, this kind of program offers a rich field, because he is likely to work in local or regional stations, where it is especially valuable.

The following script of a feature program is characterized by simplicity, forthrightness, and ease. Notice how spontaneous the lines seem. There is an easy give-and-take between Miss Hart and the announcer; neither of them feels duty bound to stick to these lines, informal as they are. If either participant suddenly gets an idea, the whole program may skid into a complete ad-lib and stay there for seconds or even minutes. However, the style of writing is so easy and natural that it is impossible for the listener to tell when the program departs from the script and when it returns. In spite of the apparent casualness of the whole business, there is underneath a tight organization, and considerable useful information is dispensed every time the program airs.

This is not an interview. Neither is it a talk or round-table. Perhaps it can be called a written discussion of passing problems. Whatever one wishes to call it, it is a feature program.

This particular one is included because every local station in the country has a similar one, and because these women's shows often attract more mail than any other type of program. The beginning writer will do well to examine this kind of script rather closely.

ROEN: Each day at noon, ELIZABETH HART PRESENTS

HART: Today, the WMAQ WOMAN'S HOME COUNCIL, thank you, Louis Roen, and good afternoon for the eighty-second meeting of the Council . . . There's so much to talk about today . . .

ROEN: To quote a popular song . . . TAKE IT EASY . . .

HART: Maybe it's because it's Spring . . . EASTER in the offing . . . and right there, there are a hundred things we women think about. Maybe even going on a DIET, so that the Easter suit will look its best.

ROEN: Are you going to talk about diets?

HART: Yes.

ROEN: And, food, too, I hope?

HART: Sure.

ROEN: Maybe a good idea would be to talk about food and diet — then you can take your choice.

HART: Which would you want to be? Fat or thin?

ROEN: That's it. And before you go on this diet, I'd like to say something. A very clever MAN once said (and remember this is a MAN talking!) He said (about a woman's weight) . . . "KEEP YOUR SKIN FRESH, YOUR HAIR SHINING, YOUR LAUGHTER GENUINE AND HEARTY — AND NOBODY WILL MIND IF YOU ARE A FEW POUNDS OVERWEIGHT."

HART: A poet and a philosopher speaking; after that I don't know if I have the courage to launch out on a recommended diet — or not. Anyway, here goes — you see SPRING is the time when women get conscious — figure-conscious. DIETING ALWAYS should be undertaken ONLY UNDER A DOCTOR'S ORDERS.

ROEN: Hurray!

HART: If the doctor cuts your diet drastically, he'll probably give you vitamins and minerals in some capsule form . . . as that's a medical problem, and we have to have the proper balance of food, to keep healthy, and not make the diet just a farce.

What I suggest is that you think of the food business as a matter of income and expenditure. You know what foods you should eat — and how much you should eat depends on how active you are.

For instance, there are two hundred calories in one medium-sized doughnut, three hundred in a piece of apple pie. If you weigh between one hundred twenty-five and one hundred thirty pounds, you spend seventy-five calories in an hour, just sitting quietly and relaxed. An hour of sweeping or dusting spends one hundred thirty calories. Obviously, doughnuts and apple pie are not for you unless you are doing very heavy work. For their bulk, they supply too much calorie-value, and they don't satisfy your hunger, either.

Better to eat plenty of low calorie foods that have a high vitamin and mineral content, like milk, lean meat or fish, and green vegetables. You need some fat and sugar, of course, but only enough to make your income equal your expenditure. That way you can't put on weight.

Keep a sort of ledger. When you are tempted by an extra piece of apple pie, put down three hours of ironing on the opposite side of the ledger. That will even things up. And unless you're feeling very energetic, you'll probably take a fresh, raw apple instead.

ROEN: Why, that's not drastic at all! I'll O.K. that.

HART: I'm no faddist about diet. I've seen too many women lose pounds of fat all right . . . then develop something that's far worse. At the same time, though, I think it's just plain foolish to SIT, and let pound after pound accumulate — then in a year or two, you see some woman, just your own age, with a very trim, neat figure, and you get unhappy and fret . . . and wonder why YOU can't look like that.

I believe in that theory that INA CLAIRE goes on. Long time ago she said, "It's only the first THREE pounds you gain that a woman has to worry about."

ROEN: A little explanation on that one, please.

HART: Well, if you STOP when you've gained THREE: and get rid of them, that's fairly easy. It's when you've gained ten or fifteen that it's hard to lose.

ROEN: COULD WE HAVE THE FOOD DEPARTMENT NOW? I'm anxious to write.

HART: It's that you're anxious to get off this diet business. In just a moment, Louis. I started thinking about the reducing business . . . because I was eavesdropping!

ROEN: That sure makes sense!

HART: Well, the other day at lunch, my table was very near another table, and at that table there were six young women. One or two I suspect were brides. The others . . . oh, say, maybe in their late twenties, or early thirties.

ROEN: Quite an interesting group!

HART: Naturally, they were talking WOMAN TALK, and I listened.

ROEN: You never know when you're safe these days.

HART: They were talking about Easter shopping, and one of the youngest said she'd like to get a bright red suit, but she was afraid her husband wouldn't like it. An older one, who might have been her sister, said that after she'd been married a few years it wouldn't make any difference what color she wore — her husband wouldn't notice anyway.

That's when the argument started — and it was extraordinary how unanimous the younger girls were in their ideas. It isn't possible to give you a verbatim report of their conversation, but we can give you the gist of it.

All except the oldest of the sextet held the wife entirely responsible for what they called "Marital Myopia." They pointed out that during courtship, a girl dressed prettily, to please the man of her choice. She was careful of her grooming and her manners, so that she'd be attractive and pleasant to be with. And if she relaxed that vigilance after marriage, surely the husband was not to blame.

One sage young creature, who must have been all of twenty-two, remarked that a careless woman was lucky if her husband didn't notice. Because if he did, he might look elsewhere for the beauty he missed in his home.

We had to leave the restaurant at that point, but we talked about it afterward. Of course, the girls were very young, too young to realize that beauty does fade with the years. But they were wise enough to know that good grooming and a desire to please can be carried all through life.

Maybe some of us need a little jacking-up on that score.

Not that we ought to go around dressed to kill all the time. But our husbands and our children like to be proud of us, like to see us looking well, even if we're not going out or expecting company. We can set a standard of neatness and good grooming in our own homes that our children will almost automatically live up to. That would be a good thing, don't you think?

ROEN: Are you asking me?

HART: No.

ROEN: Good thing. If you think I'd stick my neck out on that one, you're WRONG. I want to write recipes.

HART: All right . . . we haven't talked about fish in a long time . . . so today . . . it's SHRIMP. They're fairly plentiful in the markets now . . . and very good . . . of course . . . I'm talking about fresh, or GREEN SHRIMP. And today it's SHRIMP SERVED IN A NOODLE RING. Noodles are filling . . . and energy-giving.

Here's how to prepare the dish.

First boil the shrimps. Wash them in cold water and then drop them in salted boiling water. A dash of seasoning will give them a spicy flavor. For instance, you might use bay leaves, a stalk of celery, or a sprig of parsley. Let the shrimps boil for about twenty minutes.

If you cook them in their skins, you'll know that they're done when the shells turn pink. If they're already shelled, cook them until they're tender.

Now, that they're cooked, you're ready to start on the main dish. Chop up a green pepper. Then brown it in bacon or ham grease. Let that be the basis of a medium white sauce. You make the sauce as you would for any creamed or scalloped dish. Finally, when the sauce is as thick as you want it, add the shrimps.

While you're getting the creamed shrimp ready, start making the noodle ring. First cook a box of noodles according to the directions on the package. Beat three eggs well, and add one cup of milk. Season to taste. Then add the milk and egg mixture to the noodles and pour into a large greased ring mold. Set the mold in a pan of hot water and bake it in a moderate oven. When the noodle ring is done, carefully unmold it on a large platter and pour the creamed shrimp in the middle. Several sprigs of parsley on top will give your noodle ring a bouquet touch.

Now, from the shrimp dish. . . . Let's talk about ONIONS.

Many housewives, who depend on onions to flavor every course from soup to salad, have had to cook with onion substitutes. Leeks are plentiful. Shallots, which look like miniature onions, are a bit more scarce. But you can always buy chives in small bunches or in potted plants. And if you can't find any of these, there's always garlic.

No matter which branch of the onion family you are addicted to using, don't let the seasoning dominate the taste of the dish. An onion flavor should be nothing more than a hint.

ROEN: Or . . . to quote a poet: "LET ONIONS DWELL WITHIN THE BOWL: AND, SCARCE SUSPECTED, ANIMATE THE WHOLE."

HART: My word, you're right on your toes today, Louis, POETIC ABOUT ONIONS . . . there you have something.

This brings us to the end of our visit . . . Be with us again Monday . . . Pleasant week-end to you.

ROEN: We have just brought you . . . ELIZABETH HART PRESENTS.

Here is another sample of a feature script that serves a different purpose — promotion of the station's programs, done up in a rather neat package and designed to make interesting listening. It could very easily descend into meaningless superlatives or into a dull, routine listing of programs. By careful design this sample escapes both these pitfalls, and becomes an interesting program in itself. The program is broadcast over WMBD, Peoria, Illinois, and is written by Jean Krause.

THEME: E.T.:

WAYNE: That's right! Morning, noon, and night, it's 1470 on *your* radio dial!

Time for the week-end shows on WMBD —
Quite a line-up, as you shall see!
Drama, Music, Variety, and News — That's right!
Starting now and on through to Sunday night!

PIANO: TINKLING MUSIC:

WAYNE: You know, at ten o'clock this morning, you can hear the children's show that's been voted the best in the land . . . Tell your little gals and guys to listen to WMBD and its *Let's Pretend* . . .

PIANO: JUVENILE THEATER THEME:

WAYNE: And then, at eleven-thirty over WMBD, tell them to listen to the children's program that's been voted the best in Central Illinois! Why, it's our own Juvenile Theater!

PIANO: SPRING SONG:

WAYNE: Oh, say, Mrs. Jones . . . Mrs. Brown . . . Mrs. O'Brien. and all homemakers in Peoria . . . the CBS Culinary Expert, Miss Mary Lee Taylor, will be broadcasting from her kitchen to yours at ten-thirty this morning. Get out the measuring cup and mixing bowls and she'll tell you how to create the finest foods your palate has ever tasted. Hmmmmm Hmmmmm . . . really fine!

PIANO: DIGNIFIED CHORDS: DRAMA

WAYNE: The curtain goes up on the Armstrong Theater of Today at eleven this morning. Miss Jane Cowl, one of America's greatest actresses, is standing in the spotlight. She will give another memorable performance in a warm, romantic love story written especially for her. It's Armstrong Theater of Today, at eleven over WMBD.

SOUND: TRAIN PULLING OUT OF A STATION:

WAYNE (OVER SOUND): All aboard! Come on, folks, hurry, hurry, hurry! We're off to Grand Central Station! Mady Christians and an all-star Broadway cast will be there to put on a swell show! We'll get there at one o'clock . . . leave at one-thirty. It'll be a great trip . . . so tune in 1470 at one this afternoon!

PIANO: SOUTH AMERICAN MUSIC:

WAYNE: Buenas dias, Señores and Señoritas! We'll be calling Pan-America this afternoon at one-thirty. . . . Wait a minute . . . it's coming in . . . we're getting the signal. . . . There it is . . . it's from Rio de Janeiro. . . . Music from Brazil is what you'll hear when CBS brings you *Calling Pan-America* over WMBD at one-thirty today.

PIANO: CHORDS AFTER EACH ANNOUNCEMENT:

WAYNE: We'll present the Philadelphia Symphony at two-thirty . . .
The Colonel Stoopnagle at three-thirty . . .
The Corliss Archers' trials and tribulations at four . . .
And then at seven tonight—

PIANO: COME ON DOWN

WAYNE: Come on Down, Down to Blue Ribbon Town, and you'll hear:

TELEPHONE: "Operator, give me Murray Hill 4237. (PAUSE) Hello, Mama? This is Georgie! Yeh, your son, your own little Georgie! Where am I? Oh, I'm getting ready to go to Blue Ribbon Town! Where's that? Well, Mama, I'm telling you . . . That's the town which my good friend Groucho Marx is the leading citizen of? Yeh, that's right, Mama . . . and he's invited me over! Yes, Mama, I'll be good . . . you be listenin'. All right . . . good-bye, Mama." And you'd better be listening, too, friends . . . it's going to be a great night in old Blue Ribbon Town tonight! Seven o'clock over WMBD.

PIANO: CHURCH MUSIC:

WAYNE: Yes, we'll have church meeting tomorrow at eleven . . . the regular church time. WMBD will broadcast the service from the First Universalist Church in Peoria.

PIANO: TUNING UP EFFECTS:

WAYNE (A LA GALLOP): The house lights are lowered . . . the orchestra is in its place . . . and Arthur Rodzinski returns to the podium of the New York Philharmonic after a two-week vacation. Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D Major and Richard Strauss's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* will be played. Tune in WMBD tomorrow at two for the finest symphonic music in the world!

PIANO: PITTER-PATTER

WAYNE: From Mozart to Mairzy Doats . . . it's all the same to Annamary Dickey, the youthful Metropolitan Opera Singer who will be the guest of Andre Kostelanetz on *The Pause That Refreshes.*

PIANO: DRAMATIC MUSIC:

WAYNE: Remember that fine book *The Magnificent Obsession* by Lloyd Douglas? Then it was made into a movie with Irene Dunne and Robert Taylor a number of years back? Well, at seven o'clock tomorrow evening over WMBD, you'll have a chance to hear that great story again. Martha Scott will be the star on Walter Pidgeon's Show — *The Star and the Story.* It'll be thirty minutes of fine entertainment!

PIANO: BACK ROOM PIANO

WAYNE: Well, leave us face it! That fellow Archie — self-educated Eddie Gardner — will visit Fred Allen on the Star Theater. Archie, I can assure you, will indubitably indulge in much parsleyflage wit with the stars of Fred Allen's show. Don't tune out your dial at eight-thirty tomorrow night . . . listen to Archie as he leaves the inner sanctorium of Duffy's Tavern to bandy words with Allen.

PIANO: I'M IN THE MONEY:

WAYNE: That "Bye-bye, Buy Bonds Man," Phil Baker, will be giving away sixty-four dollars to his contestants tomorrow night at nine as usual . . . Nora and Nick Charles will bring you more adventures of the *Thin Man* at nine-thirty over WMBD.

PIANO: BUILD TO TIE-OFF ON PEORIA:

WAYNE: Set your radio dial at 1470 right now. . . . And the best in entertainment throughout the week-end will be yours . . . 'cause that's what you're going to hear in Peoria.

CHAPTER 12

WRITING COMMERCIAL COPY

The United States is one of the few countries in which radio programs are supplied free. That is to say, the listener pays for them painlessly and unconsciously. He is, however, acutely aware of the *method* by which this payment is accomplished. No American listener can escape advertising.

To the radio station and the networks, advertising is life blood. It furnishes the money which makes possible the lavish service that broadcasting offers. To the stations, advertising is a means to an end – good programming. To the advertiser, radio is a means of moving huge quantities of merchandise at a fairly low per-capita cost of contact. Most sponsors are not interested in radio, as such. In spite of the handicap of this duality of approach, the American system of radio has furnished the best programs in the world.

Advertisers use radio to sell goods. They present sales messages to the public before, after, between, and during programs. Sales copy often is written by members of the station staff. No book on radio writing, therefore, can ignore the problems and techniques involved in preparing commercial copy. The radio writer is likely to start his career on the staff of a small station. One of his first assignments will be to write commercials for as many accounts as he can handle. In most small stations, where advertising agencies seldom intrude and where business is done directly between station and sponsor, the station furnishes the copy. Writing commercials is, then, one of the first jobs a staff writer must learn.

In many small local stations there is no continuity staff. The program director, the announcers, and the receptionist do the writing. In larger organizations, there is likely to be a regular continuity department which furnishes all the copy which the station requires, including commercials.

THE KINDS OF COMMERCIALS

Stations have devised many ways in which to package advertising. Small stations must supply inexpensive advertising and also make provisions for elaborate campaigns. Originally on sponsored programs advertisers were required to pay for the complete program. Because this arrangement is too costly for many small organizations, other kinds of radio time have been made available to sponsors with smaller appropriations. This, however, is not the place to discuss in detail the development of advertising patterns and trends in radio. Here it is pertinent only to examine the various kinds of commercial writing which the beginner may be called upon to handle and to explain the principles and techniques by which they are created.

Station breaks

The simplest, shortest, cheapest kind of commercial is the station break. Most stations operate on a schedule which allows twenty or thirty seconds between programs. In other words, a fifteen-minute program will last fourteen minutes and thirty or forty seconds. The following twenty seconds are allowed for station identification, time signals, special announcements, or switching to the next program. There are many times during the day when the full twenty seconds are not needed. In such times ten seconds or even more may be put up for sale. Ten seconds will allow for a sales message of twenty-five words.

These station-break announcements are cheap because they take little time, time that would otherwise not produce revenue. Users of station-break announcements, having only a few seconds for a message, usually depend on a wide and frequent use of these announcements. Perhaps the best-known user of station breaks is the Bulova Watch Company which has become an American by-word through the consistent and constant use of station-break announcements.

Hitch-hikes

Sometimes called a trailer, a hitch-hike is a piece of commercial copy advertising some other product of the sponsor's than the main one for which the program is chiefly designed. The hitch-hike is attached to the program and comes before the network sign-off and station identification. For example, a program may be dedicated to the selling of cigarettes. However, at the end of the program, while the theme is being played, it is faded under, and a new announcer comes on with a short commercial for a pipe tobacco, made by the same company that manufactures the cigarettes. This announcement is followed either by a final burst of theme and applause or by an abrupt end of the program, depending on the timing. However, it falls within the over-all time to the sponsor. The complete program is then followed by network identification, local station identification, and perhaps a station break.

In network programs one sponsor has occasionally bought a full hour and elected to put four programs into that time. The network is required to identify itself at stated intervals, but it need not do so every fifteen minutes, unless some stations are leaving the network at that time. If, however, all stations take all the programs given in the hour, station or network identification is not required after each program. In such cases, programs are sometimes tailored to the usual fourteen minutes and forty seconds with a special commercial announcement for some one of the sponsor's products being given between the programs. Interpolated announcements in such programs are also called hitch-hikes. They are usually shorter than the main commercials.

Spot announcements

A spot announcement is usually a one-minute commercial that is disassociated from any program. Many stations will cut the time of their sustaining programs by two minutes and sell two commercial announcements, one preceding and one following each sustaining program. Thus, a station has additional and comparatively cheap time to sell when it cannot find a sponsor who will buy a whole program.

Many local stations, operating in communities where there are not enough large advertisers to buy complete programs, make most of their revenue from the sale of spot announcements. Some stations not affiliated with any network may, indeed, have few sponsored programs, but will have a schedule of spot announcements running through the entire day.

Participating spots

A participating spot program is one in which several sponsors share the expense. It usually consists of recorded music alternated with spot announcements. Sometimes five or six spot announcements are woven into a fifteen-minute program of recorded music. Each usually lasts about a minute and, in so far as writing is concerned, differs in no way from the ordinary spot announcement. Competing sponsors are not usually sold time on the same program.

Program commercials

Finally, there are the commercial announcements which are written into the regular sponsored programs. These vary widely in style and content, but they will usually be longer than other kinds of commercials. If the reader will turn back to the chapter on policy, he will find the exact time allowed for commercials under the NAB Code on programs of every length.

The Style of Commercials

There are almost as many ways of selling as there are salesmen. However, the approach to radio commercials may be divided roughly into five broad types. There are many variations on each of these types, and undoubtedly many new kinds may develop. This classification, according to style and approach, will, however, give the student some idea of how radio selling is handled.

The straight commercial

Many sponsors feel that the only way to sell goods is to talk about them in a calm, straightforward way. They want copy with a certain amount of dignity and a forthright, honest presentation of their sales message. They may want the announcer who reads it to be virile, or folksy, or jolly, or dignified, but they still desire a more or less straight presentation.

The "slug" commercial

This is the author's name for those commercials which seem to have been written by circus-poster copy writers and read by sideshow barkers. It represents a shouting approach to radio salesmanship. The general idea seems to be that the more extravagant the claims and the louder and faster they are read, the greater will be the response of the audience.

There are a few sponsors who feel that they can take the curse off their advertising by poking fun at themselves, or the program, or the audience. Their philosophy is to make the commercial as enjoyable and as interesting as any other part of the program, instead of trying to set it apart from the entertainment. A notable example was Jack Benny's efforts in behalf of Jello.

The trick or jingle commercial

Let us lump under this heading all kinds of efforts to dress up and disguise commercial copy as any kind of entertainment. The singing commercial is currently featured on the Bob Hope program in which Miriam uses Irium. There is the musical spot announcement, made famous by Pepsi-Cola and used by dozens of other advertisers.

The dramatized commercial

Many attempts have been made to find a formula for dramatizing the sales appeal of various products. Usually the announcer interviews a user of the product who makes an endorsement. It may be an imaginary interview, or it may be an endorsement which requires an actor to impersonate a customer or to read a letter from one. In the latter cases, permission must be obtained from the endorser before his name or recommendation can be used.

The choice of a style for any given commercial always rests finally with the sponsor. Some sponsors feel that they are not getting their money's worth unless they hear an announcer shouting their overstated message at the top of his voice. The slug approach usually prevails with this kind of sponsor. Some radio-wise sponsors feel that in selling to an uneducated, low-income bracket audience loud superlatives carry the most conviction.

Actually, most sponsors use the straightforward approach or some variation of it more than any other style. If the sponsor has no particular preferences in the matter and there is no advertising agency or writer to decide on the approach, a simple talk announcement may be used. As soon as sponsors begin to spend money in any sizable amounts for radio advertising and employ the services of an advertising agency, all kinds of specialized tricks are used. Men with ideas and talent in this field bring their experience to bear on the commercials. They may employ anything from an announcer accompanied by trap drums up to a specially composed musical message played and sung by a hundred musicians.

PRINCIPLES OF RADIO SALESMANSHIP

What are the principles underlying radio salesmanship? In general, they fall into two categories: name acceptance and product acceptance. Some sponsors spend all their efforts fixing the name of their product in the mind of the audience with little or no attempt to talk about or sell the product. The whole effort is concentrated on making the name stick in the mind of the audience. The other approach to the sales problem emphasizes not only the name, but also the merits, of the product.

Radio sales campaigns that concentrate on name acceptance depend largely on two techniques: repetition or catchiness, or both. Either or both techniques can be used in a very short space of time. Station breaks and spots are often used for these reasons. They can be bought on many stations and aired many times a day, thus giving the advertiser frequent mention. Then the copy writers must provide a catchy idea to make the message stick in the listener's mind. The reader will remember the Salerno Butter Cookie Child, Beeman's Pepsin Chewing Gum, Pall Mall Cigarettes, and Longine Watches because of this kind of campaign. The listener may not have liked the tricks used; nevertheless the names stuck, and that is what the advertiser wanted.

Campaigns based on getting the listener to accept the products use three basic techniques. First, a straight sales talk presents the various merits of the product. Secondly, some service may be offered, such as the recipes put out by General Mills from the Betty Crocker kitchens. Thirdly, gifts, such as flower seeds, currently being given for a small cash payment and the wrappers from the product, may be offered. The effort in these campaigns is to make the listener buy the product; the emphasis, consequently, is on the merits of the product. Of course, it is understood that the advertiser who concentrates on name acceptance is also trying to sell his product. The point is that his sales approach is different.

One other kind of advertising came into existence during the war. Many sponsors had to maintain a market and potential buyers while they had nothing to sell. They spent advertising appropriations rather more freely than usual because, if they did not, the money would be taken in taxes. During the war some companies did what may be called institutional advertising. They kept alive the name of the company and the product by building good will against the time when they would again have goods to sell. There are one or two programs, notably the *Cavalcade of America* sponsored by Du Pont, on which the advertiser has nothing to sell but good will. The Du Pont company sells nothing directly to the public. When it advertises, it is creating good will for products which originate in Du Pont plants, but which other manufacturers and distributors sell. The Bell Telephone Company even spent money during the war to urge the public *not* to use its facilities any more than absolutely necessary.

The Writing of Commercials

Station-break commercials must be brief. Twenty-five words is the average length. They may be slightly longer or shorter, but they must always come within a fifteen- or twenty-second limit. At least three repetitions of the name of the product are usually required. Obviously words can be wasted. The message must be stated at once and simply. The more quickly and deftly it can be done, the better. Repetition of the same commercial is often better than the introduction of new copy. Get a good message and keep repeating it until it becomes familiar seems to be the slogan of station-break advertisers.

Here are some samples of typical station-break commercials. These will suggest a pattern, although there is no set formula. Every sponsor will have his own particular message. Each commercial must obviously be tailored to the sponsor, the product, and the buying audience, but the basic requirements remain more or less fixed.

20 words

> ......P.M., B-U-L-O-V-A, Bulova Watch Time. You're RIGHT . . . on time . . . with a Bulova! Wear the smartly streamlined, seventeen-jewel Bulova SENATOR!
>
> All the family will enjoy CHUCKLES! — pure, wholesome tender CHUCKLES with matchless fruit flavor. Have your CHUCKLES today! CHUCKLES — good for all the family!
>
> CHUCKLES are good for all the family! Enjoy CHUCKLES often — fresh, tender flavor-rich CHUCKLES — wholesome and good, CHUCKLES — 5 slices . . . 5 flavors . . . 5 cents.

10 words

> ......P.M., B-U-L-O-V-A, Bulova Watch Time. Bulova — thousands say — finest of watches.
>
> The initials G-E on a light bulb are a mark of quality — a pledge of G-E Research to make General Electric Mazda lamp stay brighter longer.
>
> Like the sterling mark on silver, the initials G-E on a light bulb stand for quality. General Electric lamps are designed to stay brighter longer.

Station breaks use all styles of commercial writing: dramatized messages, jingles, comedy routines, and straight copy. Whatever style is used, the time limits and the mention of the product are still rigid.

Spot announcements offer a less restricted opportunity to the writer because the time limit, usually one minute, is a little more generous. From one hundred twenty-five to one hundred seventy-five words may be used, depending on the form and style. Spot commercials also employ all kinds of style devices.

If a lead-in idea is used in a spot commercial, it should be short; the point of the message or the product ought to be mentioned within the first thirty seconds. At least three to five mentions of the product are usually needed. These must be made to seem natural, not forced. The writer must strive to plant the message as often and as definitely as possible, without the audience's becoming aware of the constant repetition. A strong "story-line" is recommended. If the copy can start at a definite point and proceed through a logical line of argument, with one step leading inevitably to the next, the copy will be more favorably received and remembered better.

Here is an example of a typical spot commercial of the straight talk variety:

ANNOUNCER: Say, here's some news. Yes, this is news of the utmost importance to every Chicago woman. Now you can charge it at (NAME OF SPONSOR). Step in tomorrow at the nearest (NAME OF SPONSOR) fashion center in your neighborhood or in the Loop and open a regular charge account. Then, when you shop for the newest, the smartest coats, suits, dresses, sportswear and accessories, you can say "Charge it" at any (NAME OF SPONSOR). No extras added. Style, quality, and value still rule supreme at (NAME OF SPONSOR) and it is now convenient for you to have a (NAME OF SPONSOR) charge account. Come in today. The neighborhood stores are open until nine o'clock tonight.

This commercial is certainly not sparkling in its originality. It is, however, fairly typical of the average style of such copy on the air which is written by the station or small sponsor.

Here is another spot commercial of a slightly different type:

ANNOUNCER: Have you been paying more than you need to for an all-fabric home dye? Tintex, you know, is an all-fabric dye . . . that dyes *every* fabric without exception . . . perfectly . . . yet *costs* less than any other. All-fabric Tintex is only ten cents . . . or fifteen cents for the larger size . . . the same low prices in the *same* gray box you've always bought . . . and bought by more millions than all other dyes. You don't have to be a fabric expert . . . nor choose special different materials if you use all-fabric Tintex. . . . Tintex comes in a single box that dyes *all* fabrics beautifully. . . . Celanese, nylon, mixtures, everything. Offers the most colors, too . . . over fifty true-to-type colors . . . longer-lasting, fashion-right. Why use ordinary dyes? For easy, quick, perfect dyeing do as millions of other women do . . . buy all-fabric Tintex . . . at drug, department and dime stores . . . only ten cents or fifteen cents . . . why pay more? Tintex is sponsored by Park and Tilford, for one hundred four years a name you can trust.

The dramatized type of commercial is also common in one-minute spots. It gives a production flavor to the commercial and is generally more interesting than a straight talk. It may be very simple with only one voice added to bring in testimony, or it may be an elaborate production. Stations customarily use a fairly simple form, because they do not have the staff or funds which an elaborate production requires. In fact, most dramatized commercials are prepared by advertising agencies and circulated on transcription.

Here is a sample of a simple dramatized spot commercial:

ANNOUNCER: Ladies, here's a story for you about men.

WOMAN: Pardon me, young man. You can't tell us about men. They're all alike.

ANNOUNCER: I know, I know. That's almost what I was going to say. In one way men are all alike. For instance, when they're very young, they go running to Mother with . . .

CHILD (CRYING): Mommee . . . Mommee . . . I fell down and scratched my knee.

ANNOUNCER: Then, when they're older, they come to wifey with . . .

MAN: Oh, Mary, I got a blister on my hand from that darned hoe.

ANNOUNCER: Yes, sir. At all ages, men are alike. And it's to you, the woman of the house, that they come with their troubles. And you know what to do, because you know that Johnson and Johnson adhesive tape and Johnson and Johnson sterile gauze bandage and absorbent cotton help you care for those little nicks and cuts before they cause real trouble. So, remember the name Johnson and Johnson, first name in first aid.

This commercial runs one minute. It is somewhat unusual in that the name of the product is not mentioned until forty-five seconds have gone by. In all, the sponsor is mentioned three times and three products are named. However, it does have a strong story-line. The copy flows naturally from line to line, so that it does not seem long; yet it leads definitely to the point of the commercial. The variety of voices keeps it from being monotonous. No one voice speaks for more than fifteen seconds.

Here is another example, which is currently being aired:

ANNOUNCER: Campus conversation. Oh, oh. A student is talking . . .

STUDENT: Aw, now listen. This philosopher says, "Any fact is better established by two or three good testimonies than by a thousand arguments."

SECOND STUDENT: Testimonies? That's a four-bit word.

STUDENT: Oh, look, you dim bulb. Suppose we were arguing about . . . well, this bottle of Coca-Cola. Now, I'm pro, see, so here are the arguments I'd use. There's nothing but pure sugar in it, its tang and sparkle never vary, the bottle's sterilized for thirty-five minutes. But — would you be convinced?

SECOND STUDENT: But, you're for it. You might be exaggerating.

STUDENT: Exactly. But now, I'll ask Sally, Sue, and Pat their opinion. Now that's testimony. Hey, Sally. Like Coca-Cola?

SALLY: Why, sure.

STUDENT: How about you, Sue?

SUE: Sure I do.

STUDENT: O.K. Patsy, how would you like a bottle of coke?

SOUTHERN VOICE: I'd just adore it, but what's this all about?

STUDENT: The state rests its case. Oh, we were just having an argument about Coca-Cola.

SOUTHERN VOICE: An argument about Coca-Cola? How silly! Why, everybody loves Coca-Cola.

In this one-minute spot, the sponsored product is mentioned by name six times, and at least three sales arguments are advanced without an announcer's ever coming in to sell the product. There is an unconscious prejudice in favor of the product created by the dramatization, because there is no one voice that sets out deliberately to sell. This spot is skillfully constructed.

The trick commercial and the jingle commercial are very uncolorful on paper, principally because their attraction — if any — lies in their presentation. Girls' trios and men's quartets are often used to sing sales messages. Sound effects are frequently employed to enliven sales talks as well as to accompany dramatized commercials. All kinds of devices have been tried in the field of spot commercials. The student is therefore urged to listen to these commercials on the air rather than to read them in a book. After all, the examples given here can serve only as patterns; the effectiveness of the pattern must be judged as it comes over the air.

There is little difference in principle between the spot commercial and the participating commercial. Many of the same techniques are used in both. There are, however, two ways in which program commercials differ from spot and participating commercials. In the first place, more time is available on a program commercial. Wise advertisers do not use all of it, because one minute is about as long as an effective sales message should be; few run over a minute and a half. The second difference is that the commercial can be tied advantageously to the script. If the program is popular and has a large audience, it is wise and legitimate to tie the program to the product and the sales message. This tie is made skillfully in the Oxydol commercials on the *Ma Perkins* program. Here is an example:

NARRATOR: Here at the high school, in Rushville Center, they teach domestic science. Well, at the end of the term the girls taking the course held a sort of open house to show their parents and relatives how much they'd learned. Mrs. Cambell was telling me about it . . .

WOMAN: Why, Charlie, when my daughter Jean gets married, she'll know more about cooking and housekeeping than I did. Were you at the open house, Charlie?

NARRATOR: Yes, I was. And I think you're right. The cakes those girls made really were *delicious.*

WOMAN: Did you eat any of the angel-food cake? Jean made that one.

NARRATOR: It tasted fine. Tell Jean I said they certainly taught her how to make fine cakes.

WOMAN: I'll do that.

NARRATOR: You can tell her, too, that I said the tables certainly looked pretty.

WOMAN: Didn't they, though? Jean and Betty Howard brought the tablecloths from home. (NARRATOR AD-LIB ACKNOWLEDGMENT.) But you know, Charlie, seeing one of my tablecloths beside Mrs. Howard's sort of upset me –

NARRATOR: How's that?

WOMAN: Well, her tablecloth was so much whiter than mine. Why, hers was so white that I asked her if she'd bleached it!

NARRATOR: What'd she say?

WOMAN: She said, "No, indeed!" That she just washed it in Oxydol and it came that white without bleaching!

NARRATOR: Well, Mrs. Cambell told me she was going to try Oxydol her very next washday! So by now I guess she knows *why* Oxydol can wash clothes white without bleaching! You will, too – when you see Oxydol's Hustle Bubble suds at work. Those suds are so active they lift dirt out! That's why clothes come clean without hard rubbing. And that's why tablecloths, sheets, towels – *all* your white things, except maybe for fruit stains or such, come white without bleaching! Sparkling white! Active as those suds are, Oxydol's really safe for wash colors and rayons.

So when you go shopping, get that famous orange-and-blue bull's-eye package of Oxydol. And next washday you'll enjoy a wash that's white without bleaching. The way Mrs. Cambell's doing now here in Rushville Center!

No matter who announces the program of *Ma Perkins,* he is always called Charlie Warren, and that name has been made as much a part of the program as the central character. Rushville

Center, which is the locale of the story, has also become real to millions of listeners. This sense of familiarity could not be developed in a spot commercial. See also how the writer of this commercial makes a more or less leisurely introduction to the product — Oxydol. It is not even mentioned until the commercial is almost two-thirds over. All the background build-up, however, lends an air of authenticity and reality to the commercial message, once it is given. Notice also the strong story-line on which the whole sales message is built. Notice, too, that although the name of the product is repeated five times, it comes in naturally each time.

The highly repetitive, blatant, "slug" kind of commercial is almost never used on a program commercial. It certainly does not appear on the networks. Almost every other type of writing, however, does appear. From the Duzem family with their extravagant antics on *Road of Life* to the dignified talks on *The Cavalcade of America*, commercials come in all sizes and all shapes. There are no holds barred so long as they stay within the limits of good taste and sell the goods.

The student who starts his writing career with a small station will quickly learn to gauge the temper of the local audience. He will learn their likes and dislikes and come to know what they react to and what they ignore in commercial copy. This is the best place to learn to write commercials. If you keep your copy simple and human, it will eventually reach the market.

3

RADIO DRAMATIC WRITING

CHAPTER 13

RADIO DRAMA AS A NEW ART FORM

Many kinds of radio writing are comparatively new, but radio dramatic writing has a long ancestry. Radio drama springs from the same basic instinct for play-making that fathers all theater.

Since the time of Dionysus the theater has gone through many changes, but none were so radical as those indirectly effected by Thomas Edison and Guglielmo Marconi. Motion pictures and radio took the theater out of the royal courts and great cities and gave it to the people. The theater of today is not located in New York's Times Square, but in your own living-room.

Something even more important than a transplanting has occurred, however. In the process of putting the living theater on a strip of film or into a loud-speaker, two new art forms were created. Radio drama may be a child of the theater and of electronics, but the offspring is a totally new creation. It has a life of its own and its own individuality.

A writer approaching the field of radio drama may be justified in learning what he can from the theater, but he cannot assume that the two are alike. A playwright cannot become a radio writer by the simple expedient of crossing out stage directions and substituting sound cues. Radio is not another kind of theater to which the playwright must adapt himself. It is a new medium, with rules of its own.

What makes radio a unique medium? In the first place, radio differs from other media in appealing to only one sense. Whereas both the movies and the theater appeal to sight and sound, radio is limited to sound alone. The important difference is not so much one of limitation as of a psychological change in an audience's reaction to drama which it perceives through the ear alone. Since this topic has already been discussed, we need only mention it here.

In the second place, the psychology of the audience is completely different for another reason. In both other theatrical media the audience leaves its own environment and goes to the environment of the theater or the movies. In radio, we take theater to the audience in its own environment. Among other things, this means that it can choose whether to listen or not. People who go to the theater pay their money to get in, and even though they may not enjoy themselves, they usually stay through the play. A radio audience has made little effort to get its dramatic fare, it has spent no money, and it therefore feels no obligation to stay and hear out the play. Again, the audience, sometimes against his will, is subject to a terrific amount of distraction which is often detrimental to the radio.

The third factor which enters into the problem is extremely important. A radio audience is a one- or two-man audience. Psychologically speaking, the entire drama is put on for the benefit of those two people or that one person. It gives a tremendously direct and intensely personal approach to the entire performance. There can be a oneness between the performers and the audience which is possible in no other medium. A member of the audience in a theater or a movie house is one among many; the entire play is being presented to the audience as a whole. The spectator becomes part of the crowd and reacts psychologically with the crowd to what happens on the stage or screen. In radio the whole affair is extremely personal, and there is a direct emotional contact between the drama coming out of the loud-speaker and the listener in his own living-room.

A good many interesting hours could be spent in discussing the relative merits of stage, screen, and radio as theatrical or dramatic vehicles. Certainly each possesses something which the others do not. Neither the movies nor radio can ever have the ultimate final reality of the flesh-and-blood actor. Neither the radio nor the stage can transport the audience as visually as the movies can. A good movie director can show his audience a scene from five different angles in almost as many seconds. He can move the audience about at will so that it sees a situation either physically or psychologically from all sides. He is completely free in time, in space, and in settings. On the other hand, neither the movies nor the stage can ever do as successful a job in the field of impressionistic drama or in the field of certain non-realistic forms as can radio. Each medium has its own peculiar advantages. Each has certain disadvantages which are inherent in the medium itself. It should be understood that radio is not any greater or any less important than these other media. It should be understood that it is not a more flexible nor a finer medium in which to work nor any less fine. The point is, radio is a distinct medium with its own peculiar possibilities, its own peculiar limitations, and its own strict requirements. The radio writer must learn these requirements and know how to conform to them before he can do his most effective work.

There has been a tendency on the part of many outstanding writers in this country to scoff at radio as a possible medium for their talents. Our great playwrights, our outstanding novelists, our most important poets have not, as a group, turned to radio as an outlet for their work. It is true that there have been certain important exceptions to this statement: Stephen Vincent Benét, Archibald MacLeish, and Carl Sandburg. But these are exceptions which prove the truth of the original statement. For the most part radio writing has been done by writers whose only interest and only outlet is radio.

There are several reasons why this may be true. In the first place, radio uses up material at such a rapid rate that it cannot afford to pay the prices that the other two competing types of drama have been able to pay. In the second place, it has, for the most part, been looked down on by successful writers as a cheap and shoddy medium. There is a tendency on the part of such writers to pooh-pooh the greatness of radio as a medium for the theater. Still another reason is the necessity for learning a new set of rules. Most writers who are successful in one field seem to be contented to work in that one field only. Writers apparently follow the lines of least resistance whenever possible. Having made a success in one medium, they are usually content with the audience they can reach in that way and do not try to reach another or larger audience by changing the medium. Finally the restrictions and taboos of radio have been too much for some of our writers. They are not willing to conform to the rigid standards of self-censorship which radio imposes upon itself. All these conditions will change. The movie industry went through the same troubles. For a long time the movies were held in contempt by playwrights, and few writers were willing to allow their plays to be made into movies. As the movie industry grew in business stature, and as it was artistically perfected, great writers tended to gravitate toward this new medium and offer their services to it. Undoubtedly the same thing will happen in radio. The movement is, in fact, already under way. During the past year some of our outstanding writers have appeared at least once or twice on the air. Archibald MacLeish wrote one series for radio. Edna St. Vincent Millay made a memorable contribution some time ago with her poem *The Murder of Lidice,* which she herself adapted for radio. Perhaps better known was Alice Duer Miller's *White Cliffs of Dover,* which was first heard over the air. Stephen Vincent Benét's famous attack on the educational methods of Nazi Germany in *They Burned the Books* has been repeated several times since its first performance several years ago. So far, these are only isolated examples, but this trend will grow as writers begin to realize the tremendous audience and the enormous power of the medium of radio. No matter how skillful the actors or how gifted the directors, their work will never be significant unless they are given writing that has stature and real merit with which to work, and that time is coming.

It is a heartening thing to realize how many writers of importance radio has itself created. There are dozens of highly skilled dramatic writers who are, for the most part, completely unknown to the public, but who each day do distinguished work in their field. The anonymity of such writers is no measure of their skill or their success. Sandra Michael has done some distinguished writing in the field of daytime serials. Irma Phillips has become, in the business, almost a legendary character, and the Hummerts have made a name for themselves. There are still others who have become famous, chiefly through their writing for radio. Norman Corwin is perhaps the most widely known of this group. His experimental programs over the Columbia Broadcasting System have set high standards for a great many other writers. Some of his work has the mark of literary genius. Arch Oboler has created a national reputation for his radio writing. His work is, in general, not of the literary caliber of some of the other lesser-known writers, but he has a particular genius for the bizarre, and in that field of dramatic writing he has a large following. Paul Rhymer, author of *Vic and Sade,* is less a writer than an institution with thousands of daytime radio listeners.

Skilled writers for radio are, unfortunately, still few in number. It is an encouraging fact, however, that writers are developing within the industry. Radio is also attracting skillful writers from other media in increasing numbers, and will probably continue to do so.

Radio drama will become important in direct ratio to its ability to attract top-flight writers. History bears out the fact that whenever a writer appears with something to say and the ability to say it effectively in dramatic form, there will always be provided the means to say it. Most of the important steps in the evolution of the drama and the theater have been originated with great writers who suddenly appear, like meteors in the sky. In the train of those meteors follow great actors and great directors, who somehow find the ability and the craftsmanship to make intelligible to audiences the ideas which the playwright has set down on paper. There will always be actors and directors and an audience available to the playwright who has something important or something entertaining to say. The artistic importance of radio drama will probably be measured in proportion to its ability to encourage and to pay good writers.

So far radio has not shown a disposition to court the best writers. Radio writers have, for the most part, been kept anonymous. While writers have all been paid good salaries — sometimes almost fabulous ones — the amount of work demanded from them in return for those salaries has been completely out of proportion to the amount of work demanded of writers in the two other media. A playwright will do well to have one successful play on Broadway each season, his total output for a year may be two hours or two and a half hours of actual dialogue. This is the equivalent of only five thirty-minute programs, which would be considered five weeks' work or even less for the average radio writer. The radio industry, although it has paid high salaries to writers, has demanded too much quantity at the expense of quality. Too great a premium has been placed on prolific writing and too little on good writing. As long as the playwright can net from five to a hundred thousand dollars for a Broadway play which he has plenty of time to create, he will not be too greatly interested in writing for a medium which will demand of him the equivalent of ten or twelve such plays a year for approximately the same fee.

Radio will probably have to learn two things. First of all, great writing is not done in a hurry; it takes time. The actual writing may be turned out in a comparatively short period under a white heat of creation. But the process of building that material may have been stretched over weeks or even months. The mulling-over process, the period of pregnancy, the mental working-over through which a good piece of writing must go, take time. The other basic factor which radio has so far refused to realize is that any author hates to see his work die with one performance. Networks proceed on the unspoken assumption that once a program is broadcast it is dead. They assume that everybody interested in that program was listening to it at the time the network happened to put it on. Nothing could, in the light of common sense, be more fallacious. With over nine hundred stations broadcasting every day and several national networks constantly bombarding listening audiences, there is no one network nor station that has the right to assume that everybody wanted to hear a particular program which they broadcast at a given time. It would seem that radio might learn something from stock companies and from opera companies who will do the same plays and operas over and over and over again, always finding audiences for their performances. The Metropolitan Opera Company does not assume that *Aïda* is poor box office because it has been performed once in one season. There is no more reason to assume that a great play written by a great playwright is dead when it has been broadcast once. If it were broadcast several times, the network could afford to pay more money for it and the writer would feel that it reached a larger audience than is possible under the present circumstances.

All these shortcomings of radio, if time proves them to be shortcomings, will be eliminated. After all, radio is a young industry. It is a still younger art. These shortcomings and others will be detected and gradually corrected. As they are corrected, more and more good writers will be attracted to radio, and it will develop more of its own writers and will increase proportionately as a significant dramatic medium.

Certainly the writer who is interested in dramatic programs and wants to write for radio will find himself in an enviable position. There are so few people who can write really good radio drama that he may well find himself successful very early in life. The radio writer is someone to be conjured with. He is in a position of prestige which is enviable. After all, no matter how many actors are available, or how many production directors, or how much time on the air, unless there is good material for these people to work on, no drama can be broadcast. The radio writer is the cornerstone of radio drama; everything else is built on his work.

Because radio is so closely allied with the advertising business, the radio dramatic writer often finds himself under orders to write things which he would not do under other circumstances. This may or may not be a good thing. Certainly when commercial demands force a good writer to compromise his ideas of sound drama, it probably results both in bad drama and poor advertising. Conversely, it need not be assumed that really good writing is cheapened by the fact that it is sponsored. After all, every writer in every era must be sponsored in some way or another or he will stop writing. The fact that a writer's pay check may come from an automobile manufacturer rather than from a publisher or a theatrical producer does not materially change matters. The writer of radio scripts suffers only when commercial interests impose upon him limitations that are unfair and dramatically in poor taste. This, also, is probably a part of the growing-pains of the industry. Many good radio writers bemoan the fact that their efforts are hamstrung by commercial restrictions. If time proves these restrictions to be either bad theater or bad advertising, they will gradually correct themselves. In the meantime, anyone who writes for radio must realize that he is writing in a new medium and that he will therefore have certain handicaps placed upon him. Every pioneer must live in more rigorous circumstances than the people who follow. Writers who elect radio as a career are distinctly pioneers. They are certainly not the pioneers now that they were ten years ago, but no medium comes to full maturity in twenty-four years; radio drama as a serious art is even younger than that.

To offset the immaturity of the medium and the lack of artistic adulthood there is a tremendous audience available to the radio dramatist. Even with the single broadcast restriction, a radio dramatist has an excellent chance of reaching as many people in a single broadcast as the Broadway play may in a fairly long season of performance. As Emerson said a long time ago, there are compensations in every way of life. The life of a radio dramatic writer does not need very many compensations. There are so many advantages to it that they more than offset whatever disadvantages there are in the work. A really good radio dramatic writer is a fortunate individual.

CHAPTER 14

THE ELEMENTS OF RADIO DRAMA

SUPPOSE you have an idea for a play. If you are a playwright, you have some idea about how to cast it into the form of a play. If you are a writer of short stories, you know how to proceed. If you have never done any writing before, you probably have no idea of the methods of procedure. Certainly, if you have not written for radio before, you are faced with the questions of what tools you have at your command and how those tools are used. It should be understood by every writer that the *way* in which a thing is said is never of so great importance as the significance of *what* is being said. Nevertheless, no matter how important a message you have to impart or how stimulated you are with an idea for a play, that idea may never reach its ultimate audience unless you know what the tools of projection are and the manner in which they must be used.

The tools of the radio dramatic writer are these:

1. Theme
2. Plot
3. Characters
4. Locale or locales
5. Dialogue
6. Sound
7. Music

These are the elements with which you work. These are your saw, your hammer, your plane, and your square. These are your means of taking an idea and shaping it into dramatic form so that it can become intelligible to an audience through the medium of the drama.

THEME

The theme of a piece of dramatic writing is the point around which the play is written. It is the statement of the idea of your story. No piece of dramatic writing should ever be set down on paper or performed unless it has a theme. The theme amounts to your reason for writing the play; it is the summed-up idea of what you are trying to say. It may say in one sentence of prose what you take thirty minutes of drama to elaborate.

The theme need not be important. Indeed, many plays have been written around the most trivial of themes. It need not be a deep philosophical statement. The theme may be as simple a thing as a passing observation on the foibles of mankind. The theme of your play may be as light-weight an idea as this: "People do the darndest things to get out of an embarrassing situation." On the other hand, your theme might be: "Beauty is a thing of the soul – not the flesh."

No matter how important or how trivial your central idea may be, it should be crystal-clear in the writer's mind before a line of dialogue is written or a single scene blocked, because everything in your play will be influenced by what you are trying to say. If you don't know what you want to say before you start to say it, you will never manage to make it clear to an audience. For some obscure reason, this matter of finding a theme, or perhaps only of stating it clearly in your own mind, may be irksome. It is for most beginning writers, probably because they are often more concerned with *how* a thing is said than they are with *what* they have to say. More often than not, the central idea is nebulous and vague rather than specific and concrete.

We have said that no play should ever be written until the author is sure of his theme. This does not mean that he has to *start* with a theme in mind. As will be pointed out later, the point of inspiration in a play can be anywhere. It should also be understood that the statement of the theme may be achieved only after considerable work has been done on the play. Some playwrights compose several scenes only to find that there is something wrong. Often the difficulty lies in the fact that they had no clear-cut idea of their purpose in writing before they started. Naturally, all sorts of latitude must be allowed the creative spirit. No two writers work in exactly the same way. The fact remains that all radio dramatic writers have the medium and the audience in common, with all the limitations and requirements which those two factors entail, and they must, sooner or later, turn into certain common channels in working out their problems. Regardless of the differences in the way writers work and all the creative allowances which can be made, sooner or later they must face the problem of theme and solve it, the earlier the better.

Since the whole matter of theme is difficult to state in unequivocal terms, let us cite some examples to guide the beginner in selecting and stating themes. Some of the most obvious examples in radio are those in the daytime serials. A classic example is the program, *Life Can Be Beautiful,* in which the theme of the program is also the title. A slightly less obvious example is the program, *The Guiding Light,* in which the title was derived from the light which a minister always leaves burning in his study window at night as a symbol of God's influence in the community. The statement of theme of this program might be: "God's teachings are the guiding light for all human behavior."

Leaving the field of radio drama for a moment, let us look at some examples of themes in some of the well-known stage plays, with which the reader may be more familiar. In *Macbeth,* Shakespeare's theme might be stated thus: When ambition leads a man to commit a crime, the result is tragedy and death. In *The Merchant of Venice,* Shakespeare gives Portia the statement of his theme in the "quality of mercy" speech. Justice must be tempered with mercy before it can reach its highest end. In *The Doll's House,* Ibsen is saying that women are human beings who want partnership in marriage and are not satisfied to be treated as playthings.

Obvious examples from more or less contemporary American and English drama are on every hand. In *It Can't Happen Here,* Sinclair Lewis and John C. Moffitt are saying that the Nazi philosophy could easily take root in this country if people adopt the attitude that no such thing could happen in America. John Van Druten puts a bit of the theme of his play in his title, *The Most of the Game,* the full quotation being, "It is the spectator on the sidelines who sees the most of the game."

The theme of a dramatic piece should not be confused with the story-line. It is not a proper statement of theme to say, "It is the story of a man who . . . " etc. The theme is not the story. The story is rather the vehicle which illuminates the theme. This is a common error in understanding and should be clear now. Theme and story-line or story summary are not to be confused.

Only when what you want to say to an audience can be reduced to the most concrete of expressions have you the best chance of reaching an audience. Certainly if the idea isn't clear to you as the writer, it can hardly be clear to your audience even after thirty minutes of dialogue.

Not only must the theme be definitely decided before any writing is done — it must be decided before anything else about the play goes very far. It would seem obvious that a plot cannot be completed unless the crux of the plot is known. How can a writer create a plot if he has not yet decided what he wants that plot to convey? Axiomatic as this seems in discussion, many beginning writers make the error of jumping immediately to characterization and dialogue without having bothered to decide what they want to say in the first place.

The idea for a play may come from a number of different sources. The writer may see an individual on a streetcar and the face of that individual whom he may never know or never meet may start a train of thought which eventually results in a play. A picture, framed for a second in the window of a moving train, may be the push-off point for a serious, moving tragedy. The look on a friend's face or a story told over the coffee cups may be the point of interest out of which a writer will develop an hilarious farce. A play can begin anywhere. It can begin with a plot idea; it can begin with a character. It may begin with a line of dialogue. Often it will begin with a thematic idea. Regardless of what the inspiration for a play may be, regardless of the point from which it starts, the author must keep building and working with the full mass of material until he arrives at a clean-cut statement of the theme which he wishes to write about. Having arrived at this point, he is back at the beginning and then may turn around and proceed from there. In the whole long process from conception to execution, the germ of an idea for a play may occur at any point along that line. Wherever it occurs, however, it must be reasoned backward until the author arrives at his point of beginning which is a statement of the theme. Once this statement can be clearly, simply, and definitely made, the writer is ready to go back along the road by which he may have come. Any starting-point in the writing of a play is legitimate so long as it proceeds immediately to its theme.

At this point the reader must make cross-reference back to the chapter on radio policy. In considering radio policy it becomes apparent that there are certain themes which the radio writer cannot use. Some of the areas blacked out by the policy books are those in which writers in other dramatic mediums may work. The playwright has always felt free to attack any sort of problem he chose. Hendrik Ibsen was a great social reformer who chose the medium of the theater in which to preach his gospel. Some of the themes which Ibsen treated might not be acceptable on the American radio. Because of the peculiarities of radio's responsibility to its public, certain limitations are placed upon the radio dramatist. Scenes of a highly controversial nature will probably not be acceptable on radio for some time. Controversial issues are not barred from the air, but the discussion of controversial issues in dramatic form is discouraged. The reasons are fairly obvious. The public's acceptance of any side of the controversial issue could conceivably be swayed by the skill of the playwright in the presentation of such material. Radio is committed to a policy of fair treatment to all sides of controversial issues. Obviously such a presentation in dramatic form is impossible. It is not particularly necessary to view this situation with alarm. Provision for discussion of such issues is made in forum and round-table programs; therefore, there is less need for their treatment in the dramatic medium.

Certain other themes are not admissible because of the varied age levels of the radio audience. It is impossible to hang on the front of every radio the sign, "For Adults Only," as some theaters and movies do. For that reason there is a certain amount of material which is not permissible on the air. Ideas which are too risqué for a young audience would certainly be barred. Certain sociological discussions which might be legitimate for an adult audience, but which would be unsuitable for a child audience, are also barred because of radio's inability to select its audience in advance.

These limitations need not be considered serious handicaps. So much material remains available that the restrictions in certain areas are hardly significant. With the exceptions of a few fairly clear cases which are outlined in the policy book, the radio writer is free within the bounds of decency to treat almost any theme which strikes his fancy. It has been said, and wisely, that almost any subject in the world can be discussed in any company, provided the right words are used. To a certain extent this statement is true of radio drama. More often than not, limitations concern terminology and approach rather than subject matter. Regardless of restrictions, however, our point is that the radio playwright must remember that his first duty in the blocking of a drama is to arrive at a statement of his theme.

PLOT

Plot may be defined as the exposition of a conflict. Before any story can be said to have a plot, there must be a clearly established conflict between two or more forces. This matter of plot bothers more writers than almost any other problem in dramatic writing. This is odd, because plot is the one element which is mechanical and which can be reduced to a formula. To begin with, there is no such thing as an original plot. Some writers in the past insisted that there are only a few basic plots in existence. Polti and Schiller, among others, went to considerable lengths to reduce to the smallest possible number the basic plots in existence.[1] Others have claimed that there are only seven basic plots. However the disposition of basic plot situation is finally decided, it is certain that there are very few of them and equally certain that there are no new ones. This should do something to allay the writer's worry about the business of plotting. Since there is little possibility of originality, anyway, the only real problem in plotting is in excellence of structure. This might be even more difficult than it is were it not for the fact that plots can be blueprinted in the same way that a house floor plan can be laid out. Good plotting is only careful planning and arranging of known materials.

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[1] George Polti, *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, translated by Lucille Ray. Cincinnati, Ohio: The Writer's Digest, 1931.

If plotting is a mechanical thing, then what is the formula for creating a plot? The answer can be simple and specific. It is only when writers try to make plots complex and unusual that they run into difficulties. If plots are kept simple, easy, and straightforward in their design, they create few problems for the writer. Let us consider, then, the elements which are necessary for the creation of a plot.

The protagonist

Every plot for every story should contain a protagonist. The protagonist is the individual in the story who has the audience's sympathy. This is the character or element in the story which we want to win. It is the old melodramatic hero. Beginning writers often rebel against this obvious planning of plots. Experienced writers seldom do because they know the value and the sound human psychology which makes it obligatory. No conflict is fun to watch unless the spectators can "take sides." If you have ever had the experience of attending a football game between two teams, neither of which you knew anything about and neither of which you cared anything about, you will know what is meant here. It is not much fun to watch a game when you do not care who wins. Because we want the audience to care who wins in the conflict which we present to them in plot form, we must give them someone to "root for." That is the basic purpose of the protagonist in the dramatic plot.

The antagonist

Obviously, if we are going to have someone to be for and we are obliged to put that person in a conflict, we are equally obligated to create someone for that person to be against. We must have a villain. The antagonist furnishes us with that necessary element of our plot. Just as they are sometimes averse to giving us heroes, young writers are frequently averse to giving us villains. They want to make all their characters likable, with the result that we have nobody that we can really hate and, therefore, have little possibility for a conflict. Plots are most often successful in direct proportion to the number of people who can love the hero and hate the villain. This is putting plotting in very bald terms, indeed. It is purposely done because the best plots are bald plots. The lines of demarcation between the good and bad are clean-cut and obvious. We have someone to cheer and someone to hiss. Having those two things, we are likely to have an interested audience.

Conflict

After all this, it may seem a little obvious to insist that the plot have a conflict, because there is little purpose in a protagonist and an antagonist unless we get them together in a fight. In spite of this obviousness, a great many beginning writers carefully set up their opposing forces and never once get them into a head-on conflict. No matter how clearly drawn and well designed are the protagonists and antagonists, they are useless both to the writer and the audience unless they can be brought into head-on conflict early in the plot.

In radio drama with the strict time limitations, this conflict should have been under way before the actual action of the play starts. The playwright seldom has time to develop a complete conflict from its inception to its climax and resolution. Moreover, this total development might not be interesting to the audience. Again a football game offers a useful analogy. If you have not the time to let your audience see the whole game, then you must show them the most exciting part, which is probably the last quarter. Certainly that is the quarter which will determine the outcome. Then it is up to the writer to see that the climax in the conflict occurs during that last quarter. A dramatic conflict might spread over a period of twenty years. Obviously, it is impossible for a writer to cover as much of a story as that in a thirty-minute program. The answer to such a problem is to show him the last of the conflict and the final outcome and resolution of it. No matter what the nature of the conflict or how long it has been under way, the writer is obliged to show the high spot in the working-out of that conflict.

It should be clear that a conflict can be of any sort.

1. It can be a conflict between man and man.
2. It can be a conflict between opposing ideas or philosophies.
3. It can be a conflict of man against nature.
4. It can be a conflict of man against himself.

Regardless of what the elements of conflict are and on what level they take place, they can still furnish the excitement which arises only when there is a contest with the outcome in doubt. That is the sure means by which an audience can be interested. The conflict may take place on an intellectual plane, on a purely physical plane, or on an emotional plane. It does not matter, so long as the conflict is one which is suitable to the chosen protagonist and antagonist.

These are the three basic elements which are necessary to create a plot. Basically they are all needed. Given these three elements, the writer has only to manipulate them in such a way as to create an ascending line of interest. Certain other elements, however, which are very useful to the writer are usually present in a plot. A confidant for the protagonist and a confidant for the antagonist may be needed. Since from a purely mechanical point of view, it is extremely difficult to create a plot in which the protagonist and antagonist stand toe-to-toe and slug it out through an entire play, it becomes necessary to add other elements which make an exposition of the plot possible. In those scenes in which the protagonist is not in direct conflict with the antagonist, we want to know what is going on in his mind and what his plans are for the next move. In order to know that, it is necessary to give him someone to talk to — someone in whom he has confidence and to whom he can disclose his plans. The same difficulty must be faced in the handling of the antagonist. It may happen in working out the plot that the author finds it necessary to create scenes in which the antagonist is the central character in a scene and in which the protagonist is not present. Under these circumstances the antagonist must have someone to talk to. Again the necessity for a confidant arises. The last element which is commonly present is what might be called "service" characters. These are persons who may have no particular place in the actual conflict itself, but nevertheless are necessary to the creation of scenes in which the conflict takes place. In this category might come policemen, newspapermen, butlers, doctors, lawyers, taxi-cab drivers, and all the other types that normally inhabit the scenes in which the conflict might take place. They may or may not be important to the plot in so far as the central conflict is concerned, but they may be necessary to an understanding of the locale in which the conflict takes place and to an understanding of some of the actions of the major characters.

These cover all the necessary elements for a plot. We have a protagonist, an antagonist, and we have placed them in direct conflict. If we need them, we have a confidant for each and, in some cases, perhaps two or three confidants for each. We have all the service characters needed to complete and round out the scenes. We are now faced with the necessity of arranging these elements in relationship to each other and using them to build a plot which will hold the interest of the audience. The surest approach to this whole matter of plotting is to outline on paper the complete course of the conflict from the first time that the protagonist and antagonist have a difference to the moment when, in the final clash between these two, some kind of decision is made. It is up to the author then to take the beginnings of this conflict and build it so that it becomes more and more powerful until the protagonist and antagonist meet in final battle, the outcome of which is definite and permanent.

Let us see how the formula works. Suppose we arbitrarily take as our conflict the one between capital and labor. Or, more strictly speaking, the conflict between the man who works with his hands and the man who represents the white-collar class. We must determine our theme in order to decide which is to be protagonist and which antagonist. Suppose we decide that, in this particular story, our sympathy is to be with the white-collar worker, and our theme is that intellect is superior to manual skill, even when the going gets rough. In this case the junior executive becomes our protagonist. A foreman in the plant is the antagonist. We can easily supply each with a confidant: the executive's secretary (just to give a feminine interest) and one of the foreman's workers. The inciting action may be an occasion in the past on which the executive had had to discipline the foreman for some breach of plan policy. This motivation would be sufficient for a certain kind of individual to bear a grudge.

In the present balance of power, the executive, by virtue of his position, is dominant. Suddenly the foreman is taken into the Army and thus freed from the superiority of the executive. Because of his trade background and skill, he rises rapidly in rank. Then the executive is taken into the Army and with a much lower rank goes into the same outfit of which the former foreman is the officer in charge. The officer could take advantage of his authority to make life miserable for his former boss. This situation could be teetered back and forth until the outfit was shipped overseas and went into action. In the final action, the entire outfit could be saved because the officer had got the unit into a situation from which neither courage nor brute strength would extricate them, and the unit is saved by the education and intelligence of the former employer.

Let us take another very brief example. Let us say that the conflict is one between a strong man on the one hand and nature and human weakness on the other. An old merchant marine officer (our protagonist) is in command of the one lifeboat that got away from a torpedoed freighter. In the boat is a collection of seamen, mostly new men, recruited by the pressure of war. They are two hundred miles off Greenland in a North Atlantic autumn storm. For the first few hours the conflict is against the sea. Then, as one by one the men begin to lose faith or control of themselves, the conflict can develop between the officer and the men in the boat.

The author can arrange the conflict to suit himself. He can play God and arrange the lives of his protagonist and antagonist to suit his dramatic needs. It is perfectly possible for one element or another in the plot to be in the ascendancy during the entire course of the conflict. The antagonist may be dominating the situation right up to the climax where he wins the final victory. If the protagonist loses in the final climax, you have written a tragedy. If the protagonist wins the final conflict, you have written a comedy, or a drama.

The beginner should be warned against two things. In the first place, it is bad to end a story in a stalemate or not end it at all. When you present a conflict to your audience, you create the anticipation of a solution. If you do not give the audience the solution it expects, you are breaking your contract. The often-cited story, *The Lady or the Tiger,* by Frank Stockton, is not in a true sense a story. It is rather a plot *tour-de-force.* When you set out to tell a story, the audience assumes that you will finish it. If you do not resolve your plot, you have not finished your story. The second danger in the management of conflict is the lack of suspense. It is possible to keep one element or the other of the plot in ascendancy throughout. If this is the case, the audience must feel strongly that the situation is likely to reverse itself at any moment. The plot will probably be stronger if the situation does actually reverse itself several times during the course of the conflict. At one time the protagonist may be in the ascendancy. A short time later the antagonist assumes the dominant position in the conflict. This seesaw of power builds interest. You may have witnessed a football game where the score was a hundred and six to nothing. Or perhaps you have seen a baseball game or prize-fight where it was obvious from the outset who the winner was going to be, even though the contest ran its full appointed course. Such a contest has considerably less excitement than one in which the outcome remains in doubt until the final moment. After all, suspense is the root of all interest in plots. We want to know how the story is going to end. Who is going to win? And that is the element of the plot which must be kept in the dark as long as possible. Certain skillful writers have been able to create tragedies in which it was apparent from the beginning that the protagonist was doomed to defeat. Through sheer skill in writing and character portrayal, the dramatist may have been able to hold the audience's interest and keep them following the gradual defeat of the protagonist. This is a difficult assignment and should not be attempted by the beginner.

It is interesting to study the plots that hold audience interest and those that do not. In almost every case, the simpler the plot, the more interest it creates. The more direct the conflict, the higher the degree of emotional participation which is elicited from the audience. Long, involved, obscure emotional conflicts between highly complex characters may have interest for a limited audience. But they will lack appeal for the rank and file. When conflicts become too involved and too obscure, they tend to become the battlings of neurotic minds and to display so much abnormality that it is difficult to create sympathy for them, even though the protagonist himself exhibits many attractive qualities. Radio listeners like people who know what they want and go after it. After all, most of us like individuals of that sort in real life. There is a large segment of the listening public which is not too far removed in its literary taste from the children's game of Cops and Robbers. They like their heroes white and their villains black. This point of view should be considered in building plots.

Perhaps some examples will help to reinforce the idea of plot complication. The reader may be familiar with the novels of the late Thomas Wolfe. There is a whole school of literary criticism which believes Wolfe to be one of the great writers of our time. I do not propose to go into the literary excellence of his work here. However, it is extremely unlikely that he will ever find widespread popular approval because his story-lines are too thin, too vague in outline, and his characters are often too introspective and articulate. Stephen Vincent Benét, on the other hand, had considerable literary ability, but never for a moment forgot the necessity for a strong story-line. Even in his narrative poems the thread of the story is sharp and clear. He wrote, more often than not, about men of action who knew what they wanted and went after it.

Americans in general will probably never take Chekhov to their hearts as a dramatist. Excellent as *The Cherry Orchard* is as a character study and as a philosophical comment on the changing times in Russia, it is not essentially dramatic for an American audience because it is too complicated. There are too many cross-currents and undercurrents, and a lack of straightforward action.

It might be argued that much of the current love of "whodunits" and mystery stories is based on their virtue of strong plot-line. The detective is always right and the murderer is always wrong, and the one never leaves the other alone. Hence there are constant conflicts which make for strong plots.

Writers should not confuse obvious plotting with obvious character portrayal. As soon as you begin to draw characters in the obvious black-and-white pattern, you are writing for the pulps. That is not good literature. However, in the matter of plots there is much to be said for the obvious. The more obvious the plot, the more elemental and therefore possibly the stronger it is likely to be.

Now comes the matter of climax and dénouement. Having brought the two elements of our plot into conflict and having tipped the scale back and forth several times (preferably with a resulting rise in the interest), we must stop the action in some way. We must provide terminal facilities. Our protagonist and antagonist cannot just go on conflicting until Doomsday. How long can the struggle go on? In radio that is determined by how much time is allotted for the drama. The climax should come as near the end of that allotted time as possible, and the dénouement should always be held to an absolute minimum.

What is the climax of a plot? It is that last hard clash between protagonist and antagonist in which one or the other must be vanquished. After all, the writer does not have many choices. Either the protagonist is vanquished, in which case the play becomes a tragedy; or the protagonist wins; or the antagonist is won over to the side of the protagonist. It is difficult to think that anyone might write a play in which the protagonist was defeated and won over to the sympathy of the antagonist. That may be a possibility, but it is not recommended for the beginner.

In the plot examples mentioned before, the climax would come when foreman-now-officer admitted defeat, and the executive-now-soldier was able finally to extricate the unit from their difficulty. In the merchant marine example, the climax would come when the audience was sure that the officer was going to make the shore.

The dénouement or resolution is that section of the drama in which the author makes final disposition of all the major characters. Once the conflict is ended, there is still the necessity of clearing the stage of all the dead bodies. For example, in the plot outline referred to before, what happens to our foreman after he admits defeat? Does he get his just deserts and lose his commission? Does he see the error of his ways and make peace with the executive? Does the executive go unrewarded or get the Purple Heart? Even after the major conflict is ended, the audience wants to know some of these final details. The dénouement is the completion of all the story-lines started by the play.

The greatest virtues a resolution can have are clarity, credibility, and brevity. Of these, the last is the most important.

Even though an audience wants to know what happens to the central characters, it is not willing to sit through a long-winded explanation. They want it neat. It is possible to arrange the disposition of the characters in such a way that one of two alternative things will happen to them, depending on the outcome of the climactic struggle. In that way, as soon as the audience knows how the conflict comes out, it automatically knows what happens to the characters; the dénouement or resolution is then coincidental with the climax. The shorter it is, the better.

The whole line of any given conflict may conceivably cover a long period of time. Obviously, all the conflict cannot be related. Stringent time limitations, if nothing else, would prevent. Certainly it cannot all be cast into scene form. Therefore, the next step in the plotting process is to determine exactly what parts of the plot conflict are to be treated as exposition and what parts should be revealed by dramatic scenes. The radio play is a close parallel to the one-act play where the dramatist faces the same stringent time restrictions. Not much of the conflict can be shown to the audience in actual scenes. The author must, therefore, determine which elements of the conflict are to be cast into scene form. The usual manner of handling this problem is to show only the last few clashes between the protagonist and antagonist preceding the actual climax itself. If the conflict is one of short duration, it is conceivable that the whole story might be told in scene form. If it is a conflict of longer duration or of a complex nature, then only the scenes which occur well toward the climax should be cast in dramatic form.

If only a few of the scenes can be actually played, the playwright faces the problem of how to tell the audience the story of the conflict which preceded the actual dramatized scene. This part of the play is called the exposition, and it is one of the most difficult plot elements to handle. The audience comes in to see the prize fight at the end of the tenth round. Your problem as narrator of the story is to tell them very quickly which contestant they are to root for, and how the fight has progressed up to this point. That illustration clearly indicates the job which exposition must do in the dramatic play. The dramatist must explain all those "events leading up to the crime" which the listener will need to know in order to understand the conflict which is going on at the moment.

In order to show how the process of reducing the story-line to actual scene-blocking works out, there is presented in the following pages the original story-line as it was conceived for the program called "The Voice from the Past," one of a series in the program called *Hot Copy*.[2] The writer must be forgiven for using this example, but after all he can only vouch for his own thought processes. Anything else would be too conjectural to be of value. The left-hand column traces very briefly the story-line as it was first developed. The notes on the right indicate how each bit of this story-line was finally incorporated into the script and also shows what was omitted.

On the night of October 12, 1941 at 10 P.M. a well-dressed man suddenly awakes as from a nap, on a park bench on the Jersey side of the Hudson River. He cannot remember who he is. He does not know where he is or why he is there. There are no clues in his clothes. The only thing he finds is a wallet with $4000 in large bills in it. He is desperately afraid, but he doesn't know of what or whom he is afraid. His instincts tell him to hide at once. He sees the river with the ferryboats crossing it, and crosses over into Manhattan. There he finds an obscure hotel, holes up for a week, and grows a beard.	This part of the story is never dramatized. The information is included in the scene between Jeff and Anne. (Scene 2)
During the next three years he drifts into the bond business and discovers that he is a minor genius at it. He quickly amasses a large sum of money in several brilliant operations. He knows, of course, that he	This is all told briefly in Scene 2.

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[2] Broadcast November 12, 1944, over the Blue Network, 4:30 P.M. CWT.

is the victim of amnesia, but he dares not ask for police assistance because of the fear complex which he has developed. After three years, however, he begins to feel more secure, and the desire to find out his identity finally gets the better of his fear.

He finally decides to hire a private investigating agency to take his case and Jeff Warren (our hero) is recommended to him.

He goes to see Jeff and offers him $5000 if Jeff can find out who he really is.

This alone is Scene 1.

Jeff, as is his custom on this series, takes the story to Anne Rogers (our heroine) who writes a very popular syndicated column called "Second Glance." Anne is interested in the story as Jeff outlines it and offers to help. Jeff says he needs the help of a psychiatrist. Anne offers to call Professor Masters whom she knows from her college days. She calls him and, after describing the case briefly, asks the Professor what the usual treatments are. After some questioning, the Professor says that sometimes, if the patient is hypnotized and interrogated, facts come to light which cannot be remembered when the conscious mind is in control. Anne begs the Professor to help them on the case and he agrees.

This all happens in Scene 2.

Jeff consults with his client and gets him to agree to the experiment. A time is arranged and the client (who, by the way, is named John Henry Martin), Jeff and Anne all meet at the Professor's laboratory. There the Professor hypnotizes Martin and tries – unsuccessfully at first – to get a reaction.

This material appears nowhere and is left to the audience's imagination.

Finally the Professor asks him the name of his business. Hesitatingly the client says, "The West Indies Importing Company." Then they ask him what or whom he is afraid of. He replies, "The Rock." At which point he breaks into violent perspiration and the professor says they dare not continue any longer this time. Upon being awakened, none of this means anything to Martin, but his old fear seems renewed and he refuses to submit to hypnosis again. He tells Jeff he may investigate whatever leads he already has, but that he will, under no circumstances, allow himself to be hypnotized again.

This action is all placed into Scene 3.

Jeff looks up the West Indies importing Company and gets an appointment with its president, Mr. Cervera. He invites Anne to come along. They meet Mr. Cervera and ask him about John Henry Martin and also about "The Rock." Cervera is polite, but says that none of his employees ever disappeared and he is sorry he can't help them.

This is Scene 4, which is followed by the middle commercial.

Anne and Jeff leave, both feeling some suspicion for Cervera. Just outside the building, Jeff sees that they are being tailed.

After getting a good look at the man shadowing him, Jeff takes Anne for a merry chase through a series of hotel elevators and manages to lose the man following them.

This is Scene 5.

Anne goes back to the office and Jeff goes to Police Headquarters for a look at the records and a conference with Inspector Collins (another regular character in the show). There are no records for either Cervera or anyone nicknamed "The Rock."

This is not put in scene form, but as exposition in Scene 6.

Jeff is convinced that (*a*) his client is in some way connected with the West Indies Importing Company and (*b*) that there is something fishy about that organization. He discovers that the company owns a

This is all included as exposition in Scene 6.

large warehouse down on the lower East Side and he decides to do a little snooping that night. He calls Anne to ask if she would like to go along on a little jaunt.

When Anne picks Jeff up in her car at 11:30 P.M., she wants to know what is up. He tells her to drive to a spot a block from the warehouse and park. She is to wait there while he gets himself in and looks around. If he does not return by 12:15, she is to call Inspector Collins and have the place raided. Anne protests at being left behind, but is overruled.

This is the action of Scene 6.

Jeff goes to the warehouse, picks the lock and enters. He finds hundreds of cases of sugar and is about to leave in disgust when the doors open and three large trucks drive in and unload more sugar. Then the men start opening these cases and Jeff sees that the sugar cases are only a cover-up for a huge liquor shipment. Jeff tries to sneak out and is discovered on the way. They shoot at him, but he manages to escape and makes a run for the car. Anne, hearing the shot, is terrified, but scoops him up into the car, and they make a quick getaway.

This is never dramatized, but included in the exposition of Scene 7.

This is the action of Scene 7.

Jeff drives at once to Headquarters and tells Inspector Collins about what he has seen. The federal authorities are notified and the place is raided immediately. Huge quantities of smuggled liquor are confiscated, but the men have disappeared. And again Jeff is stalemated.

The only lead he can think of is the man who trailed him away from Cervera's office. He goes to Headquarters, finds his picture in the file, and asks Collins to have him picked up. Collins's men find him late the next afternoon.

None of this is dramatized, but included in the exposition of Scene 8.

In the meantime, Jeff has another brain-storm. He asks his client to shave off his beard and darkens his hair (which I forgot to mention was snow-white, although the man was apparently only about forty years old). By these changes, Jeff hoped to get some idea of how Mr. Martin looked before he lost his memory. Acting on a hunch, he arranges to spring the new version of Mr. Martin on the man who had been picked up in the afternoon — a man named Nitalni, who was obviously a member of the Cervera organization. Jeff arranges to have them all meet in his office that evening and invites Anne to come along.

This is the action of Scene 8.

Anne arrives first and completely fails to recognize Mr. Martin without a beard and with black hair. Then Collins begins on Nitalni. Jeff on a hunch accuses him of attempted murder and suddenly confronts Nitalni with Mr. Martin. Nitalni gasps in fear. Following his advantage, Jeff pretends to have all the facts and offers to help Nitalni if he will act as a state's witness to verify some of the facts. Nitalni agrees. Thinking he is only corroborating what they already know, he tells them that Jeff's client is the president of the West Indies Importing Company and that his real name is Campbell. When Jeff asks Nitalni what his version is of the method by which Cervera moved in, the story comes out. Cervera posed as a buyer, offering Mr. Martin (really Campbell) a huge sum of money for controlling interest in the company. On the day when arrangements were to be completed and all papers were at hand, Cervera simply brought his henchmen in, forced Campbell to sign over the stock, and then sent him out to his death. Meantime Cervera, thinking Camp-

This is the rest of the action of Scene 8.

bell safely dead, proceeded to take over the company and use it as a screen for his rum-running activities.

All this means nothing to Campbell. He remembers nothing. However, Jeff decides to take him back to his old office, at the West Indies Importing Company, in the hope that the familiar surroundings will bring back his memory.

This is the action of Scene 9, the final scene.

Anne, Jeff Collins, and Campbell go to the office, which is in a mess because of the gang's hurried exit and the police's subsequent thorough search. It is no go, however. Campbell does not recognize anything. All at once, Anne notices a vault which no one had seen before. Campbell says that is natural because it is hidden by the paneling of the wall. Everyone starts because Martin has now remembered something about the place. He starts to show them how the vault door works when suddenly it opens and out pops Cervera, gun in hand. He had been using the vault as a hiding-place. There is a tense moment in which Cervera threatens to do a better job on Campbell this time. A movement by Inspector Collins distracts Cervera's attention for a moment and Jeff lets fly with a heavy inkwell to the side of Cervera's head. The usual gunshot and scream, but nothing is hurt except the woodwork.

All this is a part of the action of Scene 9, the final scene.

The shock of the shot suddenly snaps Campbell's mind back to normal. He at once becomes indignant and, of course, does not recognize any of these people. He wants to know why his office is all torn up and who these people are. They introduce themselves. He appeals at once to Inspector Collins to help him. He is in danger from a man named Cervera. He had been robbed of his stock and taken into the country and tied in an old cabin. There was an explosion and then — he can't remember anything after that. Collins points out Cervera, who is still unconscious on the floor. Among them all, they try to help Campbell understand that three years, blank to him, have elapsed since the events which he believes to have happened that night. Gradually, they get things explained to Campbell. Finally he has everything more or less clear except who Jeff is. Jeff says, "I'm the private detective you promised $5000 if I could find out who you were. And I hope you remember that!"

It should perhaps be explained that, although each story in this series was complete each week, the two characters, Anne Rogers and Jeff Warren, appeared in each; several other characters (of which Inspector Collins was one) appeared frequently. The problem in scene selection for this story was compression. There was plenty of material for sixty minutes of dialogue; but only twenty-five minutes of playing time was available. The reader will notice how great sections of the story were skipped over and either implied by the way the scenes ended and began, or woven into the action of other scenes in the form of exposition. An obviously good action scene, the one in the warehouse, had to be sacrified on the altar of inflexible time.

It should be further pointed out that even the story-line as presented here represents the final pruning-down to what appeared to be an absolute minimum. Much more detail was incorporated in the original story-line. Even so, many of the scenes are topheavy on exposition. The story was made playable only by sprinkling the exposition throughout the scene. It came when enough was happening so that its introduction would not be tiresome or when the information was needed for an understanding of the action.

This is not intended as an ideal example of the way to cast a story into scene form. At best, it is fairly typical of an average case. It will at least give the student an idea of the problems involved.

Having laid out the complete story-line and having decided which parts are to be cast into scenes and which must be handled as exposition, the next step is the signing the actual presentation. This will be a combination of dramatic scenes and dramatic exposition. It is bad practice to begin a play with exposition. The first job of the dramatist is to interest the audience. It is hard to interest an audience with exposition. You interest your audience with the basic conflict. Therefore, the best way to open a play is to show that a conflict is in progress. It should be shown in such a way that the audience can quickly decide who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist, and consequently whom it will want to have win. Having established this much in an opening scene, the audience will need to know certain things in order to appreciate the progress of the conflict. At this point it begins to want to know some of the background of the conflict. Never feed exposition to an audience until it asks for it. Once it has asked for it, you can give that information with reasonable assurance that it will be accepted. Therefore, your expositional scenes will probably follow the opening scene, which shows the conflict of the forces engaged. It is even better practice to sprinkle the expositional facts in little bits through the play rather than to take time from dramatic action to give them all at once.

The next step in the plot process is a complication of the conflict. Remember, your main job is to keep this conflict interesting, and the easiest way to do that is to change the balance of power. If, in the opening scene of the conflict, the antagonist is on top, then the next move, in changing the balance of power, would be to put the protagonist on top. This shifting back and forth of the balance of power in succeeding scenes keeps the outcome in doubt and builds interest in an ascending line.

How can a plot be complicated? There are only three ways:

first, you can introduce new facts; secondly, you can introduce new characters which may shift the situation; finally, you may have the original characters involved in some action which will change the original pattern. Let us illustrate the use of these methods. Suppose your plot centers around two opposing football captains. The outcome of the story and the plot will hinge upon the result of a game between the teams of which your protagonist and antagonist are captains. At the end of the first quarter the villain's team has made one touchdown; the score is six to nothing. At this point the antagonist is in the ascendancy. In order to change this balance of power, you introduce a new fact: a light drizzly rain. The audience can then be told that the protagonist's team has a better chance under such weather conditions. This new fact may change the balance of power. During the second quarter, the protagonist's team makes a touchdown and a field goal. The balance of power shifts and there is a resulting complication in our plot.

The introduction of new characters to change the balance of power in a conflict is particularly useful. Instead of a rain in the football game illustration, we might introduce a substitute player, who would make a spectacular play to change the balance of power.

The introduction of new action by the one or the other of the conflicting parties can be used to change the balance of power. Using the football illustration again, the protagonist may win a temporary advantage by a complete change of tactics. He might decide to take a desperate chance on a trick play which would result in a score.

Every change in the balance of power — and it should be changed as often as it can be made credible — should intensify the conflict. Each meeting of forces must be stronger, more dramatic, and more likely to prove a final outcome. These shifts in balance of power keep the audience in doubt, and therefore interested. They should build an ascending interest until the climax which resolves the action.

To illustrate changes in balance of power, turn back to the story outline printed on the preceding pages. Here, the basic conflict is between the detective and the unknown facts of his client's identity. The antagonist is not Mr. Cervera, but rather the combination of circumstances (of which Mr. Cervera is an important one) which prevents the detective from solving the case. The first shift in balance of power is at that moment when Jeff and Anne learn Martin's business. Here is a fact – a lead. The balance of power shifts again when that lead proves apparently worthless after the interview with Cervera. It shifts still further against the detective when he discovers that he is being followed. It shifts back when he is successful in losing his shadow. It shifts against him when he finds no trace of Cervera or "The Rock" at Police Headquarters. It shifts back in his favor when he discovers the rum-running racket, but shifts against him once more when all the men who might have furnished evidence get away. The final swing of the pendulum comes when Jeff confronts Nitalni with his client. From then on there is no shift in power, but rather a steady closing-in on the problem by the detective.

This constant shift in balance of power is followed through the course of the action up to the final scene where the climax occurs. The only difference between the climax and the preceding clashes is that the climax scene is final. The audience must have the feeling that this is the last encounter and that there is a definite settlement of the conflict. By definition and necessity, the conflict in the climax scene must be more intense and higher in dramatic value than in any preceding scene in the plot.

The last job in the plot routine is the creation of the dénouement. The author's job here is to make a final disposition of all the important characters. In a cleverly constructed script it is possible to make the climax and the dénouement seem one. The facts in any given conflict can be so arranged that the audience will automatically know what happens to the characters as soon as it knows the results of the final conflict. In radio, where time is important and the audience wants its full measure of entertainment, the dénouement should be as short and as near the climax as possible. If it can be arranged so that the climax and dénouement take place simultaneously, so much the better. There is, however, the obligation of disposing of all the principal characters. The nearer the climax can come to the last line of the play, the better the plot is.

For an example of climax and dénouement or resolution, turn again to the *Hot Copy* story. Although the mystery is well on its way to solution in the eighth scene when Nitalni discloses his identity, the final climax does not come until two things have happened: (1) the man who caused all the trouble must be apprehended and (2) the central character must somehow surmount his amnesia and again take his rightful place. Both events occur in the last scene within half a dozen lines of each other.

The resolution is not much of a problem. It remains only to reorient the client in his newfound memory and to reintroduce him to all the people present. The final line of the program is inserted to give the program a good tag rather than to dispose of the business. The resolution has the virtue of taking less than a page of dialogue. Thus the climax and the end of the show were close together, certainly close enough to hold an audience through to the end. It also provided the last bits of information that rounded out the yarn.

One old-timer in the business summed it all by saying, "Make your climax and then get out fast and you're all right." The new radio writer could get much worse advice and probably will.

Suppose we take an example and see exactly how a plot is worked out. Some time ago the author wrote a half-hour radio drama entitled *A Fairy Called Maggie.*[3] It furnishes a good example, since the whole story sprang mainly from plot. The author, suffering from an overdose of cops and robbers, clever spies, and super-clever New York sophisticates, decided to do a fantasy. That was the beginning of this script. But the idea of doing a Hans Christian Andersen tale on the one hand, or a pseudo-scientific supernatural yarn on the other seemed equally uninviting. Could there be, he wondered, such a thing as a low-comedy fantasy? What would happen if one mixed a fairy tale with the most earthy kind of characters one could imagine? The idea seemed to have at least passing merit, and he decided to try it. From that point, the thought processes in the development of this plot went something like this:

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[3] First produced by Northwestern University Radio Play Shop on WJJD, March 8, 1942.

> What is the earthiest kind of character I can think of? A farmer? No. Too serious. A truck-driver! It seemed to have possibilities, so I make a note. A tough truck-driver named Mike. The possible incongruities of mixing up a tough truck-driver with a fairy seemed to be a "natural" for low comedy. In order to keep the fairy from being too far out of key, I decided that the fairy must be an Irish fairy with a very unfairyish name — hence Maggie. This meant that my truck-driver would have to be Irish too. All right. He's Irish. And he's superstitious. I'll have Mike get into trouble and his good fairy, Maggie, can help him out.

So far, from a technical point of view, there was a protagonist and a confidant for the protagonist. But there was no antagonist and no conflict. There is no possibility of a plot with no more than that. It was obvious that the next step was to choose a conflict and an antagonist to put into effect.

> What kind of conflict would a truck-driver be concerned about? Well, why not his truck? This seems natural enough. But what about it? Everyone is talking about gas rationing and the rubber shortage. Anything there, I wonder? Why not? A truck-driver can't drive a truck unless he has tires. Perhaps a rival trucking outfit? Seems possible, but how would they manage it? They might steal his tires. No. Won't do. That puts me into drama and I've set out to do a comedy. Suppose it's a friendly rivalry, and Mike's rival gets his tires by means of a trick? Fine, but what kind of trick can I dream up? Mike wouldn't be so stupid as to give him the tires off his truck. Perhaps a spare set? Yes! That's it. Mike's friend, Butch, tells Mike he has a new set of tires ordered, but their arrival has been delayed. Mike, being forehanded, has a spare set of new tires on hand. Butch, the villain, asks Mike to let

> him have his spare set of new tires, and then Mike can have the set he's ordered as soon as they come. That way they can both keep operating. Mike, to accommodate a friend, agrees. But Butch, mean man, has no set of tires ordered. He plans to use Mike's and then tell him the "joke" later and pay Mike for them.

This point adds the necessary factors to the equation. It may seem a little flimsy at the moment, but it has provided an antagonist and a conflict. Tires are necessary to the operation of a trucking business. The protagonist has tried to help a friend and is being double-crossed. From here the planning process proceeded thus:

> Sooner or later, Mike will have to discover the scheme. Butch will then pay for the tires and refuse to return them. Mike can't recover them short of violence. His tires are about worn out and he needs the new ones to keep on in business. What to do? He has no legal evidence of ownership. This seems like a good place to introduce the fantasy. I'll have the fairy, Maggie, help Mike get his tires back. This is a nice idea, but there's something wrong with it. If Maggie is a real fairy, all she has to do is wave a magic wand and "whoosh" the tires are back. And no conflict and no story. What to do? Obviously, we'll have to put some limitations on Maggie. Suppose she's a good fairy and she can't practice any black magic. Suppose she has to operate just like anyone else, except that she is a fairy and she is invisible. Seems as though the idea might have possibilities.
>
> Another idea! As long as I'm going to give Maggie human limitations, why not also give her some human appetites and desires? It might provide some more comedy. It's worth a try, anyway.
>
> It remains now to decide how Maggie will proceed in helping Mike get his tires back. Well — why not let her do it through the one supernatural trick we've allowed her — her invisibility. I'll have her haunt Butch into a state of nerves until he gives up.
>
> I need one thing more. I need a definite situation which will force the tire business to an issue. If Mike owns his truck and

> is out for a contract which he can't get with his old tires, I have the necessary motivation for starting the action. To make the plot still tighter and the conflict more direct, why not let Butch go after the same contract — and get it — with Mike's tires. This will give me an extra ironic turn.
>
> Well — the plot sums itself up this way: Butch has hornswoggled Mike out of a set of tires. Mike is out for a contract, but he can't get it because his tires are too old, and the man who has the job is afraid to trust a truck with such old tires. Butch steps in (using Mike's tires) and gets the contract. Mike can't touch him legally because he loaned Butch the tires in good faith. So — he calls on his good fairy to help him. This good fairy, Maggie, agrees to help him, if Mike, in turn will take her out and show her a good time, because being a good fairy is pretty dull stuff. Mike agrees — gets into all sorts of trouble trying to take an invisible fairy dining and dancing. But Maggie lives up to her part of the bargain and haunts Butch out of the tires. That puts him out of business, Mike gets the contract back, and they all live happily ever after.

There are the bare bones of a plot. Stated thus, it seems obvious and unbelievable. However, if it is handled whimsically and the humor of incongruity played up, it is workable. From a plot point of view it is sound. It provides a protagonist, an antagonist, and a definite conflict. It provides for a change in the balance of power and a definite resolution. It also has some inherent comedy possibilities. The next step in the plotting process is to reduce this generalized plot outline into actual happenings and scenes.

It must be remembered that the audience must be brought into contact with the conflict as soon as possible in order to capture the audience interest as early as possible. The audience must also be given the background information, or exposition, as soon as it is necessary to an appreciation of the action. There is the question of where the story will be taken up. We must decide when and how to introduce the various characters. All these considerations will influence the blocking of the plot into scenes. Two other questions remained unanswered. When shall the supernatural note be introduced, and are there any additional central characters necessary? The answer to the first question seems pat. If the fairy is introduced to the central character at the same time that it is introduced to the audience, it will save a lot of exposition and at the same time increase the comedy possibilities in the situation. As for the other characters, it seems likely that we'll need at least two other central characters – a confidant for both the protagonist and the antagonist. In addition, it is apparent that some service characters will be needed. These can be provided as the blocking progresses. With these ideas in mind, let us see exactly how the scenes were finally blocked out. The following is an outline of a rough scene-blocking which served as a guide in writing this script:

> Scene 1. Locale – Mike's office. Those present are Mike, his helper, Joe (a very timid, absent-minded kind of chap who is long on loyalty and short on brains), and Butch. Mike makes a heated demand for the return of his tires. Butch explains that they're all used now, so he's paying for them. His haven't come, so he's keeping them. Mike finally suspects that the tires Butch ordered are a myth. Butch laughs at him and walks out. Mike starts after him, but Butch makes a quick getaway in the truck. Mike is boiling, and slow-witted Joe can't see why. Mike explains to him (and to the audience) what that dirty bum, Butch, has done. Their only hope, says Mike, is to get the contract for hauling food to the near-by Army camp. That might give them a priority to get new tires. They must get that contract.
>
> Scene 2. Locale – an office at the Army camp. Those present are the army officer in charge, Mike and Joe. The officer is telling Mike that he can't give him the contract because his truck is not up to standard specifications – tires too bad. The Captain is sorry, but they had to award the contract to his rival – Butch.
>
> Scene 3. Locale – Mike's trucking office. Mike is in the office cleaning out his desk while Joe is outside in the garage putting the truck up on jacks. They are out of business. As he cleans out his desk, Mike comes to an old family lucky piece which his grandfather had given him. He looks at it and tries

to remember what the magic formula was. All at once he stumbles onto it and – pingo! There is a fairy present. Mike can hear her, but he can't see her. He is completely flabbergasted. She tells him to make a wish and she'll try to grant it. When Mike recovers from his surprise, he wishes for his tires back from Butch and much bad luck for Butch. The fairy says she's a good fairy and can't bring any harm to Butch, but she will try to get his tires back. She also confides in Mike that her name is Maggie. Joe walks in in the midst of this conversation and suspects Mike's sanity. Mike, however, is in great good humor and tells Joe to stop closing up. They're going to stay in business!

Scene 4. Locale – Mike's boarding-house. He's cleaning up to go out for supper. He picks up the lucky piece in wonder and murmurs the magic word and – pingo! There is Maggie again. Mike is a little embarrassed to have a lady in his room while he's dressing, but Maggie assures him she isn't looking. Maggie wants to be taken out to dinner. She says it's only fair that Mike do something for her, since she's going to get his tires back. Mike reluctantly consents.

Scene 5. Locale – a roadhouse. Mike and Maggie are having dinner. Play it for comedy. Mike is embarrassed by taking an invisible lady to dinner, but Maggie is enjoying it a lot. Butch and Kitty Malone, an ex-girl friend of Mike's, appear, and Maggie has fun with them. She finally gets Mike evicted from the roadhouse with her pranks, but she promises to go to work on Butch.

Scene 6. Locale – this is a montage scene in which Maggie sets out to "haunt" Butch. We will use four short scenes in mounting climactic order which show the process of getting on Butch's nerves so that he's ready to yell "Uncle." The last of these scenes is in Butch's boarding-house in which he gets so scared and upset he starts yelling, and everyone, thinking he has gone mad, insists that he be put in jail.

Scene 7. Locale – a cell in jail. Butch has pleaded to see Mike. Mike visits him and Butch pleads with him to call off the banshee. He begs Mike to take the tires back for what Butch paid for them. Mike isn't interested. Finally he agrees to take the tires back at half price – in other words, give Butch half his money back.

> Scene 8. Locale — in the cab of Mike's truck on the way to deliver groceries to the camp. Make it obvious that he is back in business and has his contract. Joe and Mike and Maggie are all in the cab singing. A few lines to show that Maggie has been permanently elected as mascot and the domination of her feminine charms is already settling on Mike and Joe.

This is a fairly detailed blocking of scene in so far as plot is effected. In the final writing of the script, several little refinements were effected and several comedy devices were used to bring out more comedy. However, so far as plot is concerned, this is the main sequence of events. Of course, the whole plan did not happen quite as casually and quickly as might seem here. Many false starts were made before the final rather simple plot was worked out. But the result was a script which, on the surface at least, followed the formula of sound plotting fairly well. It also had a very good reception.

Notice how the conflict gets under way at once. The first line of the first scene is a shouted command by Mike to Butch demanding the return of his tires. As the scene progresses, we gradually find out that (*a*) this is comedy, (*b*) there's a scrap in progress, (*c*) we want Mike to win it, (*d*) we do not want Butch to win it, (*e*) Butch *is* winning now.

The first complication is the fact that Mike's tires are about finished. This means more tires or close shop. Mike makes a valiant effort to get the Army contract. For a moment the pendulum swings to the hopeful side. With the loss of the contract, the balance of power is right back where it was. Enter Maggie, and the whole complexion of things changes. The balance of power is on Mike's side now — or so he thinks. Later it develops that Maggie is a good fairy and cannot just wave a wand and get his tires back. The balance swings back again. The roadhouse scene, plotwise, is pure comedy interlude during which progress in the plot comes to a standstill. The balance of power shifts back to Mike when Maggie goes a-haunting, and the climax comes definitely when Mike buys his tires back at half price. Butch is licked and this story is finished so far as the conflict is concerned. We still must have the resolution, which is the concern of Scene 8. This is rather longer than would normally be desirable; it is hoped that the comedy of the situation justified the rather lengthy exposition which had to be used to complete the resolution.

Plots are to dramatic writing what scales are to the pianist. They can be practiced in the same way. The beginning writer should spend a good deal of time working out sample plots, experimenting in the building of climaxes, working on succeeding scenes for rising action, and trying his hand at quick, clean-cut dénouements. These are problems which the beginning writer can handle in his daily practice. Plots can be blocked on paper and tested just as accurately as though the entire dialogue were written. It is not necessary to write the play in order to test the value of the plot. The writer will do well to set himself plot problems and spend considerable time working them out. An important thing to remember is that plots are mechanical things that can be managed. Most other elements in dramatic writing are not mechanical and cannot be managed at will.

In handling plots, the writer should not lean too heavily on *deus ex machina.* The "god out of the machine" can become a liability if worked overtime. In other words, do not leave too much to pure chance. If the shift in power in the plot can come from forces originated by one side or the other, a better plot will result than will be the case if the balance of power changes by pure accident. Audiences like to see heroes fight their own way out of the corner rather than have the corner removed by a cyclone. Care is necessary to insure a plot against incongruity. No matter what kind of conflict is created, it must be inherently right for the people involved. Incidents must be true to character. You can make anything happen so long as it is something that conceivably could happen to the characters you have portrayed. While a plot is mechanistic and can be manipulated by the writer, it must be manipulated within the bounds of suitability for the characters and the situation. The writer must not allow incongruities to distort his situations.

The writer should look on plotting in exactly the same way that an architect looks on sketching and blueprinting. An architect is constantly making sketches of ideas for buildings that pop into his head. They are to him the first expression of an idea on paper. Plots are the same kind of help to the writer. They represent the sketching on paper of an idea for a story. They further represent the first attempt at organization of structure. When they are completely worked out, they pass from the sketch to the stage of blueprint, where we are dealing no longer with a rough idea, but with a finished idea worked out in complete detail and scaled down to the last fraction of an inch. A good plot should be planned in complete detail before any actual writing occurs.

Plot is of further value to the writer because it is through plotting that he creates the structure of his play. The organization of all the material that the dramatist wants to give his audience is expressed finally in his plot. Very often the measurement of the success of a piece of writing is gauged by the accuracy and effectiveness of its structure and organization. It is a process which he must master as soon as possible. It should be remembered that originality is not the greatest virtue in plotting. It is the clearness and rightness of organization which is its greatest virtue. From what has been said, it is apparent that plot is something vastly more important than the stringing together of a series of ideas in straight narration form. It is quite possible to narrate a series of incidents without having a plot. It should be remembered that the important contribution of a plot to a dramatic show is its capturing of audience interest through the push and pull of conflict and the tight organization of material.

CHAPTER 15

THE ELEMENTS OF RADIO DRAMA (continued)

CHARACTERIZATION

THUS FAR we have discussed the matters of theme and plot as tools of the radio dramatist. We come now to the problem of characterization — the most fascinating of all the aspects of radio writing. As opposed to plotting, which we have said is largely applying a formula to specific material, and which is largely mechanical in approach, the creation of characters is definitely imaginative. In this field the writer begins to feel free of rules, delivered from discipline, and is, within reason, at liberty to let his imagination work in a truly creative way.

To the dramatist, the sheer fun of putting an individual together, personality bit by personality bit, until a completely created character stands forth, is the most interesting and stimulating part of writing a play. No two individuals, of course, are alike. Two writers setting out to create the same character will end inevitably with two different persons. Any writer who has tried to pick up a radio serial where some other writer had left off knows what tremendous difficulties there are in attempting to duplicate characters. Some writers, with great facility for dialogue, seem unable to create a convincing character to speak that dialogue. Of all the tools of dramatic writing, characterization is perhaps the most important.

What are the writer's sources for characters? From what supply does he draw when he sets out to create a series of characters for a play? Even a practiced writer may not be able to answer these questions to his own satisfaction. Most of us do not realize the obscure sources from which we draw our "original" ideas. Almost certainly there is no such thing as a purely synthetic character. Whether or not the writer realizes it, he draws on all his past experience in creating his characters.

Reading is one of the best sources. The fiction of other writers, persons figuring in the newspapers, or biographies may provide leads for the creation of characters.

The second source lies in the parade of people whom the author is constantly meeting. It is unusual, however, for an author to attempt to put on paper, direct, in photographic form, some individual he has met. But many individuals he meets will give him ideas for a character. The final product may bear little resemblance to the actual person from whom he gets his original idea; nevertheless, that person furnishes the starting-point.

More writers probably create characters through synthesis than through any other means. The finished character may be the result of observation of individuals, it may be the result of reading, it may be partly the result of sheer imagination; more often than not it is a combination of all three. A picture or a voice on the telephone or on the radio may start a train of thought which will end in the creation of an interesting character.

The beginner should be reminded at this point that meeting people and analyzing their reactions is a basic part of his day-to-day work. A dramatist should spend much of his time meeting people, talking to them, and getting acquainted with them. He must find out how they tick and why. Only by this process can he understand people well enough to create believable characters. Certainly the more people he meets and the more people he analyzes, the more easily he can draw on that acquaintance and observation when he creates the characters for a story. People are seldom copied complete, but the mannerism of one person, the aptitude of a second, the point of view of a third merge in a completely new character with the total interest of all three.

The second process in the creation of a character is getting acquainted with him. When you meet a new person, you are introduced to a completely unknown quantity. If you are associated with that person over a long period of time, you will gradually come to know much about him. At the first meeting, you will form an impression of him; you will see certain of his dominant characteristics. But there is much more that you do not know. It is possible to be acquainted with people for a whole lifetime without knowing what they are really like. Under other circumstances, it is possible to become well acquainted with an individual in twenty-four hours. The circumstances under which you know a person will govern how much you find out about him. The way to know people is to watch them in a crisis or, better yet, live through a crisis with them. At such times their guards are down; they show themselves for what they really are. In a crisis you can see through the outward shell to what they are really like underneath.

However it is managed, the writer must become thoroughly acquainted with each of his characters. He must create all possible facets to that character, whether they have any obvious bearing on the story in hand or not. The creation of characters and getting acquainted with them takes time. It cannot be hurried in fiction any more than it can in real life. You cannot sit down at a typewriter and bang out some specifications for a man. Characters are not created in this way. They grow, and the author's acquaintance with them must grow in the same way that his acquaintance with persons in real life grows. It is, however, possible to create types and one-dimensional characters by the simple process of saying, "We will make this person thus and so." In such a process the writer does not know his character. He will probably discover, when he comes to write lines for the character, that he has no notion of how the character would speak; he has not yet become acquainted with him.

There are certain ways in which the process of getting acquainted with characters can be speeded up. Most of these are tricks which every successful writer has used over and over. They should not be regarded as a substitute for time, however. They are only methods of compressing that time into shorter periods.

When you set out to create characters, first of all make a case-history sheet for each. Include every bit of pertinent information that you can think of. Any or all of the items in this case-history outline might be pertinent in the creation of any character.

Case-history Outline

Factual Data

1. Name
2. Street address
3. City and state and phone number
4. Age
5. Sex
6. Height
7. Weight
8. Color of hair
9. Color of eyes
10. Complexion
11. Build
12. Religion
13. Intelligence Quotient
14. Occupation
15. Address of occupation
16. Employer
17. Annual income
18. Married or single or divorced
19. Education
20. Place and date of birth
21. Specific bodily deformities
22. Artistic accomplishments
23. Mechanical accomplishments
24. Membership in organizations
25. Officership in organizations
26. Father's name
27. Father's occupation
28. Father's income
29. Father's cultural background
30. Father's age and religion
31. Father living or deceased
32. Mother's name
33. Mother's occupation
34. Mother's cultural background
35. Mother's age
36. Mother's religion
37. Mother living or deceased

Personal Characteristics

1. Introvert, extrovert, or average
2. Physically attractive or physically unattractive
3. Socially sure or socially unsure
4. Courteous, rude, or average
5. Scholarly, athletic, artistic, or some combination of these
6. Loud, quiet, or average
7. Emotional, unemotional, or average
8. Cowardly, brave, or average
9. Quick reaction time, slow reaction time, or average
10. Abstainer, moderate drinker, or drunkard
11. Generous, stingy, or average
12. Idealistic, cynical, or average
13. Leader, follower, or both
14. Friendly, unfriendly, or average
15. Sincere, insincere, or average
16. Lone wolf, gregarious, or average
17. Neat in appearance, sloppy in appearance, or average

A great many other questions could be asked about any individual. If the creator of a character can answer all these questions and answer them after due consideration so that the answers grow out of his real concept of the character, the writer is well on his way. It is, of course, quite possible to set down arbitrary answers and still not be clear about the character. Arbitrary answers are of no value. But if these questions can force the writer to consider his character in the light of the characteristics involved, he is on the right road.

Sometimes it speeds the process of creating a character to write a detailed physical description. This may, on the surface, seem a waste of time, since radio is a blind medium and the appearance of the character will make no difference to the audience. As a matter of fact, it does make a difference to the author and it accomplishes something: it helps to make the character crystal-clear in the writer's mind. Then it is easier to write dialogue so that the character explains himself to the listening audience. Certainly no writer can make clear to an audience a character who is not clear to himself.

The process can be speeded still further by putting your character into an imaginary situation and guessing his reaction. Pick up a daily newspaper and skim through the stories until you find a news story which might conceivably have happened to the character you are creating. Put him into the news-story situation and see how he will react. If you cannot guess how he would react under this specific set of circumstances, you need to do more study of your character. An exercise like this will show you the things that are lacking in your knowledge of your character. Try him out in a dozen situations until you can guess his reactions in most of them. When you have arrived at that stage, your character is beginning to take shape.

Finally, it is obligatory that you create in your mind a clear-cut picture of the way in which your character speaks. After all, you must make this character clear to the listening audience through his lines alone. What he says will tell the audience much. How he says it will tell them more. You must, therefore, decide on his habitual sentence length, his habitual speech rhythms, his habitual word-choice, and his normal manner of expressing ideas. This must be followed by a decision as to how he would speak in abnormal situations. How would he speak in a crisis? Could he keep his head or would he go to pieces? If he went to pieces, how would he be likely to express his confusion in speech? How to do all this will be discussed shortly under the heading of character delineation.

More important than anything else in the creation of characters is the allowance of proper time for them to develop. There seems to be a period of gestation which many authors will tell you is sometimes painful. At any rate, it is a process which cannot be hurried beyond certain limits. The more an author has written, the easier this process of character creation becomes. No matter how skillful or experienced he may be, however, there is still a certain irreducible minimum in time which is necessary for the proper creation of a character.

A careful playwright will develop each character in his script, whether it be the protagonist or a policeman who simply passes the time of day with one of the other characters. Naturally, this business of creating minor characters can be carried to extremes. Beginning writers, however, should err on the side of too much preparation rather than too little. In some cases the kind of person who appears in the scene may be of no importance at all. It may be only important that the audience know his occupation or his attitude to a given action. In that event it is obviously a waste of time to create a completed character. In most situations, however, reality and richness can be added to a script if the minor as well as the major characters are completely developed. They need not be given a great number of lines; those they are given, however, must produce the impression of a real person rather than an anonymous actor.

Beginning writers tend to invent type characters. This is the commonest of mistakes. For some obscure reason they will pick actors and comedians as their models and draw characters of the type of person which these actors habitually play. Their concern is not with an individual, but with a broad stereotyped character. As a result, there is no breath of life in the puppets. It will be easier for a beginner to create real characters if he follows the case-history approach suggested above. It is difficult to answer as many questions as those listed about even an imaginary character without that character taking on a certain individuality. Beginners fail to ask themselves enough questions about the people they are creating. They are satisfied with a small set of surface characteristics. This may be sufficient from the point of view of plot, but it is seldom sufficient to give the flavor and distinct impression of a real individual. The audience hears lines made up for an actor to speak. Only when the third dimension of the author's imagination is applied to a set of personal characteristics does the magic of creation take place and the character come to life for the author and eventually for the audience.

It is difficult for an author to create a character that is completely foreign to any person he has ever known. The beginning writer can hardly talk about a gangster if he has never met one. He will almost surely fail to realize that a gangster is not a person apart, but really just a human being with some peculiar quirks. The unskilled writer, tackling such an assignment, is likely to create a character that is an amalgamation of all the movie badmen that he has ever seen. No convincing character can emerge from that approach. Only when the author is drawing on his own information can he write convincingly. He may group a series of characteristics that will result in a unique character. However, each of the characteristics must be familiar to him from firsthand acquaintance. The grouping of them is his only original contribution.

The beginning writer would do well to forego trying to create characters from scratch and look around him for interesting people about whom he can write. He should draw his characters from his community or from a list of acquaintances. Direct drawing from life is the best possible aid to creating realistic characters. The more mature and experienced writer may be able to synthesize to a greater extent than the beginning writer, but reality in characterization comes only when the writer has himself turned to life for his material.

Having completely created a character in his own mind, the next problem is to make that character clear to the audience. There are at least five ways in which this can be accomplished. Characters can be drawn:

1. By writing character sketches or casting suggestions to accompany the script. In these notes, specific estimates of the characters can be made and recommendations as to the kind of actors that should be cast.
2. By having the characters in the script talk about each other.
3. By the kind of thing the character says in the script.
4. By the character's actions in the script and his reactions to specific situations.
5. By the character's manner of speech, which will include:
    - *a.* The habitual word-choice assigned to him.
    - *b.* The speech rhythm built into his lines.
    - *c.* The characteristic idiom assigned to him.
    - *d.* The pet expressions given him.

Here are some ways in which these methods have been applied in scripts to make characters real. In a recent episode of *Ma Perkins*[1] a new character, Jeffrey Powell, appeared in the script. He had been talked about for weeks before he actually appeared. On the day that he made his appearance the writers put this explanatory note into the script to guide the production director and help the actor[2] in achieving the character.

> Jeff has loved this woman tremendously with a love undimmed by years. He has day-dreamed — dreamed of the time when he would awaken to hear Mathilda's voice saying, "It's I, Jeff . . . Mathilda. I am here." And each time he has awakened to a Mathilda-less void, an empty world he has sought to endure by quiet, well-planned living. He is far too characterful

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[1] *Ma Perkins* is currently broadcast at 12:15 P.M. C.W.T. over CBS and 2:15 P.M. C.W.T. over NBC. Sponsored by Procter and Gamble, the script is written by Henry Selinger and Leston Huntley, and directed by Phil Bowman.

[2] The part was played by Harry Elders.

to feel sorry for himself; therefore, he is at no time intentionally pathetic. However, there is pathos in his brave smile, his soft-spoken words, his poor attempt to be casual and friendly.

The audience could not, of course, have the direct benefit of this production note, but it probably received a clearer picture of the character because both actor and production director were given specific instructions. Not many writers use this device, but it is a good one.

We have said that characters can be made clear to the audience by having other characters in the story talk about them. This comes under the heading of exposition, and as such must be handled judiciously. If it is well handled, it will be effective. Here is a bit of dialogue from a broadcast which the author produced on *Author's Playhouse*.[3]

QUINCY: . . . and if it's his nature, like Uncle Benny, your man, to prowl; if it's his nature to cut the fool, why, it's interfering with the ways of Providence even to quarrel with him about it.

OLD HEN: . . . If he'd content hisself prowling. But he ain't content until he cuts the fool. He loves to torment folks. Doc, the patent-medicine man, in particular. He's been doin' it as long's Oak Bluffs has knowed him.

QUINCY: Oak Bluffs is mighty fond of Uncle Benny, and Doc's his friend.

OLD HEN: They ain't so fond of him as they are superstitious — as though he was the devil hisself.

QUINCY: Can't blame folks none. He looks like one. Him so little an' quick and bald-headed, except for them two tufts of white hair sticking straight up over his ears like horns.

This passage, extracted from two pages of dialogue about lovable, worthless old Uncle Benny are enough to show how much can be revealed about a character and how well he can be shown to the audience before he even makes an appearance, by having other characters talk about him. Shakespeare uses this device in every one of his plays; for example:

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[3] *Uncle Benny and the Bird Dog*, a short story by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and adapted by Christine Metropolis. Broadcast over NBC October 27, 1943.

> I can, Petruchio, help thee to a wife
> With wealth enough and young and beauteous,
> Brought up as best becomes a gentlewoman.
> Her only fault, and that is faults enough,
> Is that she is intolerably cursed
> And shrewd and froward, so beyond all measure
> That, were my state far worser than it is,
> I would not wed her for a mine of gold.[4]

Nothing more need be said to give the audience a rough idea of what Katherine will be like. She has only to make her entrance. Often, of course, the writer may not wish to take time for portraits. Sometimes a quick line, inserted almost incidentally, will do all that is necessary. Suppose two women are talking and a third approaches. One of the women might say:

> "Don't say anything about this in front of Jane. You know how she is!"

Perhaps that would be enough to give us a notion about the entering character. Often such little cues are preferable to long discussions. They certainly slow up action much less.

This device must not be overused, since it is essentially exposition, and every radio play is so crowded for time that exposition must be held to a minimum.

We draw many conclusions about a character from what he himself says: the ideas expressed and the way in which they are expressed give the audience excellent keynotes to character. Here is one speech from which a whole character sketch might be written. A young ensign has been ordered to active duty. He is having a last talk with his fiancée, and he says:

Johnny: I haven't anything to offer you, Nancy. Nothing but a name . . . and you have a good name of your own.

Nancy: You said you loved me.

Johnny: I do. That's why we can't get married. (Gently) Look, Nance. You don't seem to realize things. I'm going to war. I may get myself killed. I have no right to tie you down and then walk out on you. I may come out of this scrap — prob-

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[4] *The Taming of the Shrew,* Act I, Scene 2.

> ably will. And if I do . . . I want to marry you then, Nancy. I'd like you to wait for me . . . if you can. But I might not come back. And you've got to be free, Nancy. It wouldn't be fair any other way.[5]

Since this is a controversial subject, the listener might or might not agree with Johnny, but at least the honesty and unselfishness of his motives are apparent. What he says tells the audience what he is.

Hamlet gives us many excellent examples of self-analysis of which this one will serve:

> . . . I have of late — but wherefore I know not — lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercise; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears to me no other thing than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me . . . [6]

Much can be learned of Hamlet's character by a study of that speech. As in all good plays, it assumes more meaning when considered in context.

Jumping from the classic to the contemporary, one can frequently hear Charlie McCarthy describing himself as "just a chip off the old block." And so it goes. A well-drawn character speaks for itself.

One of the best means of revealing a character is through his actions. Action, to quote a *cliché,* speaks louder than words, and final judgment of your characters will be made on the basis of what they do. Obviously, if they speak bravely but play the coward, they will be judged cowards. This fact will govern the very basis of your plot. Aside from the action of the major plot of the play, there are many ways of making action tell.

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[5] *Monday Morning Class,* written by Albert Crews and broadcast over the Blue Network, August 13, 1943.

[6] Act II, Scene II.

Suppose you create a situation in which a man and woman (your leading characters) walk into a room full of people whom the man knows, but who are strangers to the woman. The manner in which the man handles the introductions will be an excellent index to his character. The way in which a man orders a meal or treats a taxi-driver will give an audience an indication of the kind of person he is.

In radio, where characters at best are hastily drawn, no opportunity must be overlooked to add to the broad outlines of your characters those little details which will help your audience to know them better. And their actions can tell much without slowing the progress of the story.

The last way in which a character can be shown to the audience is through the manner of speech assigned him. In a well-written radio drama, the manner of speech will be different for each character. After all, the characters are individuals and their speech should reflect their individuality. If, after you have written a script, you could interchange lines at will between characters without causing actors to change their characterizations, you have written poor dialogue. The lines for each character should be so exactly tailored for him that they will sound wrong if read by any other character.

What are the elements of dialogue that give it individual flavor? Why is it impossible for one character to speak the lines of another in a well-written script? What tools does the writer use to delineate character in his dialogue? They might be listed as follows:

1. Habitual word-choice
2. Habitual sentence length and structure
3. The basic speech rhythm habitually employed

Suppose we illustrate the matter of word-choice first. Obviously, people's vocabularies differ, depending on their education, their environment, their occupation, and their temperament. For any idea which the character needs to voice, there are innumerable forms of expression. The way in which he speaks must depend on the kind of person the writer has created. There is nothing mysterious about this rule. It is, however, so simple and so obvious that many writers ignore it completely. Suppose the character must say that he is leaving a gathering in disgust. Depending on the kind of character the writer has in mind, he might make any of the following statements:

> "I'm scrammin' dis joint!"
>
> "I won't stay here another minute! I'm leaving."
>
> "The whole business is utterly absurd. I shall have no part of it. Good-bye."
>
> "If you feel that way, to hell with you. I'm going!"
>
> "Sorry, old boy. I don't see it that way. I think I'll push off."
>
> "Good-bye! ! !"

It is obvious that none of these lines could be used by any character other than the one for whom each was written.

Suppose a character wants to express satisfaction. The bobby-soxer will say, "Super!"; the office girl will say, "Swell!" – along with half of the rest of the United States; the conservative will say, "Good!"; the elevator man will say, "Okay!"; the housewife will say, "Wonderful"; the subdeb will say, "Out of this world!"; the professor will say, "Excellent"; the press agent will say, "Colossal"; the New Englander will say, "It'll do"; the cynic will say, "Not bad"; and so on. Just for a finger exercise, add ten more to this list yourself. So much for word-choice.

The consistent use of a given sentence length and structure will help to delineate a character for an audience. Naturally, all kinds of people use all kinds of sentences, but each person will tend *habitually* to use one type of sentence structure and length more than any other, again depending on the factors of environment, education, temperament, and (to a lesser degree in this instance) occupation. A well-educated person from a genteel environment will tend to use longer, more complex sentences than will a person of no education and no cultural background. A nervous person will use shorter, choppier sentences than will a calm, deliberate person. A college professor is likely to be more verbose than an aeronautical engineer who may be equally well educated in a different field. The difference in this case is due to the influence of occupation on speaking habits.

Suppose you have a scene in which a man is disapproving of his wife's coffee at the breakfast table. If you want to create the picture of a gentle but firm man of considerable cultural background, you might write a line like this:

> Emma, I don't think you gave this coffee the full benefit of your attention this morning.

A genial Kansas farmer in comfortable circumstances might say:

> Mom, you musta got kinda absent-minded this mornin'. Coffee's not as good as usual.

A different kind of Kansas farmer might say:

> Emma! That's not coffee. It's hogwash!

A metropolitan sophisticate might say:

> The coffee? Well, I've had worse at the Astor, but I've also had better at Charlie's doughnut shop.

Notice the variety both in the sentence length and in the sentence construction. In each case the character of the individual comes out even in examples as brief as those used here. None of these could be substituted for the others. They simply would not fit the one-line character identifications made here. The writer's problem is to make the dialogue — in terms of sentence length and structure — match the character which he is creating.

The last tool for the making of characteristic dialogue is that of speech rhythms. These should differ as much as word-choice and sentence structure. In fact, speech rhythm will more or less naturally evolve as a result of the combination of these other two factors. Speech rhythm is one of the surest indications to an audience of the kind of character that the writer is trying to present. A nervous, unstable person will tend to use choppy, short rhythms. It will come in spurts. A sentence may start off on one track and then suddenly shift and go off in another direction. Such a case of mental instability and change in thinking might be reflected in sentence structure and speech rhythm better than by any other means.

Speech rhythm can best be illustrated with specific examples. Suppose your problem is to create a young feminine addlepate who flutters helplessly at the need for decisive action. That kind of character might be painted for an audience with the following lines:

> Oh, George, do you think we ought to . . . what I mean is . . . well, I don't want to. . . . Oh, dear! Why does life have to go and get itself all complicated!

The jerky, broken rhythms of the speech help in this instance to create the kind of picture you want to give an audience.

Suppose you want to create a character who is a shrewd, astute, successful financier. In order to create such a picture in the minds of an audience, suppose you wrote a line like this:

> I'm not quite sure I understand what you're getting at, Jones, but I'm rather doubtful of the method you're using, under the circumstances.

It is all wrong, rhythmically. The audience would not get the kind of picture you wished to create. The rhythms are too long, too regular, too measured, to give the impression of the keen mind and fast thinking that we associate with the kind of character in question. Suppose you wrote a line like this:

> That's as high as it'll go. Sell now. Sell in small quantities and spread it, but sell. Do you understand?

Notice how shorter sentences, shorter words, sharp rhythms, and compact structure all combine to give the speech vigor, sureness, directness. It is true, of course, that the line itself indicates decision and sureness, but it is directly reinforced by the decisive rhythms in the lines.

SETTING THE LOCALE

The setting or locale in which the story takes place may or may not be important to the story, but in some cases it is of paramount significance. Some stories could grow only out of a definite locale. Other stories may be of a kind that could happen anywhere, and the particular place which the author picks may have little or no significance. Usually, though, locale is important. If it is not of primary importance, it has a secondary importance in that it helps to establish a feeling of authenticity. The audience wants to have the story in real surroundings so that the story itself will seem real. Authentic and colorful locale give reality to a script to a degree that few other elements in the story can.

Whenever possible, the writer should set his stories in a place which he knows at firsthand. The more places a writer knows, the more settings he can use. This is one of the many reasons why a writer should travel. If the writer knows a locale intimately, is familiar with the names of the streets and the relationship of different parts of the community to each other, he can reproduce it so faithfully that his audience will recognize it instantly. Moreover, a writer can seldom fool his audience. So many people travel that some segment of the audience will be familiar with almost any part of the world that the author chooses for a locale. Some of the audience will have been there and know at firsthand what it is like. Even those who are completely unfamiliar with the locale about which you are writing will sense the authority which firsthand knowledge gives to your writing. This familiarity will show through lines almost in spite of you. It is always wise, therefore, to use locales with which you are familiar.

Inevitably, stories will occur in which you will have to use a locale which is not familiar to you. In such cases you must fall back on exhaustive research. If the locale is important, the writer must use all the research methods available to him. The first step will probably be to refer to your encyclopedia for a condensed report, with any other volumes in your own reference library with information about the place in question. Next consult an atlas. Master the geography of your locale. Be sure of distances, altitudes, topography, climate, and other such basic information. Look up cross-references to famous landmarks or well-known spots in or near it. If this does not give you enough information — and it probably will not — visit the nearest library and consult the card catalogue. This will give you leads on books and articles that will be of further help. Hunt for pictures of your locale in books, in collections of reprints, in your local art museum. You can probably cull a list of fifteen titles in a half-hour's search in the card catalogue of even a modest village library. A large library would probably net you dozens of titles. Hunt maps, other than those in your atlas. Hunt in magazines like the *National Geographic.* For references to places in the United States, the writer will find the series written by the WPA writers' project during the depression years one of the most useful references. There is a book for every state, and some volumes are even concerned with cities. Published by various houses, some of the books are already out of print, but most libraries have a complete set. They are simply titled by the name of the states or cities about which they are written. Most of them are based on sound research; many of them are entertainingly written. They are also well divided into subsections so that any place of importance in any state in the Union can be easily found.

For up-to-date information, newspaper files are often helpful. The writer may turn to travel bureaus, chambers of commerce, and similar sources for more detailed information which may not be available in book, picture, or map form.

Finally, one of the best ways to get the feel of a place is to talk to someone who has been there. While this form of research is not always possible, it is more often available than not. In large cities members of the consular service can supply information and literature about their countries and specific localities. As a result of World War II, many widely-traveled soldiers are available to the next generation of radio writers. By the same token, the writer will also be forced to be much more careful and accurate about his handling of locales.

Having chosen the locale of the story, your next problem is to make that locale real to your listeners. This can best be done by selecting for mention in the story those elements which are typical and peculiar to the setting you have chosen. Almost every person, traveling for the first time, feels a certain sense of disappointment at discovering that basic life processes are pretty much the same in all parts of the world. There are grass, trees, sunshine, rain, birth, death, breakfast, and dinner wherever you go. A person suddenly dropped down in the middle of a field in France might easily mistake it for one in southern Indiana. He would not have to go far, however, to begin to recognize certain important differences. There would be a different feel to the landscape. The buildings have certain peculiarities which an American-born individual would recognize as unfamiliar. These are the details which are important to the writer in the establishment of locale. Try to find those things which are unique to a given locale. It may be the kind of buildings, it may be the way people dress, it may be the kind of streetcars, or the side of the street on which the automobiles drive. It may be something as intangible and as indefinite as the attitude of the people. But there will be differences. These differences are the things the writer must be able to discover and to express in words. What makes New York different from New Jersey? What makes Beale Street in Memphis different from Harlem Avenue in New York? What makes Piccadilly Circus different from Chicago's Loop? What is the difference between a southern Illinois town of two hundred people and a South Dakota town of two hundred people? The difference between communities may be the difference in the outlook of the people. It may grow out of the geographical difference. It may grow out of the habit of mind of the population or of a way of life. The point is, there will be certain definite differences. Certain things will epitomize a given locale. Those items are what the writer seeks to put into his script. Those are the details which will give it reality and a third dimension.

Specifically, for radio, the dramatist must study the sound values of a locale. What sounds are typical? After all, the writer must recognize the fact that part of his locale he must transmit in terms of sound. What pattern of sound will create it unmistakably for the listener? To anyone who has heard it, the rumble and screech of an elevated train is unique. A city dweller who is familiar with it would recognize it anywhere. How would you go about painting a sound picture of a Nebraska wheat field? By asking questions like this and finding the answers to them, the writer can begin the process of translating a locale or a scene-set into vivid terms.

An interesting question arises here. How many concessions must we make to the limits of the audience's experience? It is true that many people have preconceived notions about a given locale. The notions may be right or wrong, but they are nevertheless popularly accepted. They amount almost to conventions in sound effects and in scene-settings. How much can the author humor these preconceived notions? All one has to do is mention Georgia and the Old South and the average American listener outside the South will promptly call up a movie-engendered picture in his mind of a tall pillared mansion standing at the end of a magnolia-bordered drive with the Hall Johnson choir singing on the steps. Obviously, this is a stereotyped, romantically conceived notion of the Old South. It could be argued that if a different picture were created, the audience might find difficulty in accepting it. This is not the case! An audience will always accept reality if it is skillfully and vividly portrayed. There is no reason to conform to these fallacious impressions of a region if the writer knows better.

There is one consideration which the writer must take into account. He must respect the background experience of his listeners. He cannot depend for scene-set on any factors which would not be known by people outside the region. He must try to pick elements which will at least be somewhat familiar to any audience.

Scene-setting is most easily accomplished by being specific. Use of actual street names and references to actual localities are permissible provided you do not give actual addresses. It would be safe to use "Bug-House Square" as a locale for a story of Chicago's near North Side. That colorful square block of city park is open to anyone, and a story set in that locale could be made credible. It would not, however, be wise to use the number of a real house on North Dearborn Street. The street could be mentioned and the locality, but to name a real address would ruin an illusion of reality. A fictional address, on the other hand, is quite permissible. Nothing gives an audience such a sense of the reality as the use of actual places with whose names they are familiar. Even if no member of the audience has been to many of the places about which you write, you can be specific in your references to those places and the audience will accept them readily. Such references will give the audience a feeling of actually being in the locale in which your story takes place.

Suppose the writer has decided on a locale which he knows intimately. How is he going to make it intelligible and real to his audience? In the opening of the script, he may give the announcer a short expositional speech which sets the locale. The announcer may simply say, "We take you now to Paris," and go on from there, leaving the rest of the exposition of locale to be filled in by other devices. If the "feel" of the locale is of immediate importance to the script, it may be worth the time necessary to have the announcer define it more exactly. For example, he might say:

> We take you now to Paris — not the Paris of today torn by the terrors of war – but the Paris of 1935, when Paris was still . . . Paris; a city like no other in the world. A city where people live in the sidewalk cafés in the summer . . . where taxicabs honk their cacophony to heedless crowds . . . where laughter bubbles up easily like the sparkle in the ten-franc champagne . . . and where a man can come to forget. This is the Paris of our story tonight. On a certain warm June evening, Jerry Malone idled up the Champs Elysées from the Place de la Con-

corde and turned in at a sidewalk café opposite the Hôtel Royal. He seated himself and said to the waiter . . .

Obviously, in this example, more is accomplished than merely setting the locale: A mood is established, a period in history is sketched, and the first character is introduced.

The use of striking and well-known types of people helps to establish locale. For example, a recent gag routine in the Bob Hope show ran something like this:

SOUND: PHONE RINGS.
HOPE: Hello.
COLONNA (ON FILTER MIKE): Hello, Hope. How are you?
HOPE: *Where* are *you*?
COLONNA: Just a minute. I'll find out. Hey! Taxi!
DRIVER (IN BROAD BRONX ACCENT): Aw, Shaddup!
COLONNA: Hope! I'm in New York.

Obvious, and funny.

Suppose a script were to open this way:

SOUND: BACKGROUND OF BUSY DRUGSTORE LUNCH COUNTER.
JOAN: Honest to Pete, Marty, I don't know what Steinman was thinking about. I danced circles around that old hag. But when the routine was set, here I am in the back row and there she is right out in the front line, center. I ask ya!
MARTY: Yeah. I know.
JOAN: How didja come out this morning?
MARTY: Strictly as usual. They're casting some kind of a horse opera in the Guild office this morning, but I couldn't even get inside the door. You'd think they was selling cigarettes! Honest!

Even a person who was completely unfamiliar with show business would recognize this as show-girl talk. A New Yorker would probably decide that the scene took place in the Pennsylvania Drugstore at the corner of Forty-fifth and Broadway in Times Square, and he would be right. If in the opening scene an audience overhears the conversation between a couple of jockeys weighing in, it will assume the locale to be a race track.

Sound is one of the best devices for identifying the locale of your story. A clatter of many typewriters will tell the audience they are in a large and busy office. The sharp snap of cards being riffled and the clink of silver dollars on a bare wooden table would help to take them to a western gambling dive. The warm-up of a plane motor close by and farther off the whine of a plane in take-off would establish the locale on an airport ramp. The quiet dip of an oar in water and the occasional croaking of a frog would help to establish the scene in a rowboat at night.

Sound can set not only a general, but also a specific, kind of locale. Suppose you want to establish a scene in a night club. Crowd voices and laughter, the clink of glasses, the blare of a small dance band would set the scene. On the other hand, subdued crowd sounds, hushed murmur of silver service, and the soft music of a gypsy string ensemble would suggest quite different surroundings, although it, too, would spell "night club." Examples by the dozens can be cited to show the importance of sound in establishing locale. It is wise always to remember that the whole pattern of sound which is likely to occur in any given locale is not nearly so important as the specific sounds which are peculiar to that locale. Thus, the acoustical peculiarities of a locale help to establish it for an audience. The hard, sharp echo, repeated quickly and bouncing off into the distance, characteristic of a stone cave, is a fairly distinctive pattern of sound. Anyone who has ever heard it would recognize it. The cavernous echo of a large church or cathedral is also distinctive. This is a somewhat limited and specialized device, but its usefulness should not be overlooked.

The author can emphasize his locale by specific but natural references to it in the conversation of the characters. The more specific and the more offhand these references are, the more effective they will be. Above all, the audience must never sense that the characters are talking only for the benefit of the audience. It would be obvious, indeed, to introduce locale in this way:

JOHN: Isn't the moon beautiful tonight as it climbs above that bank of clouds here by the river Avon about which we have read so often?

MARY: Yes, and see how the punts rock at their moorings in front of the famous Memorial Theater.

There are a lot of things wrong with that dialogue, but at least one of the most obvious is the labored references to the surroundings. Characters, in making references to the locale, must not say things which flesh-and-blood persons would not naturally say to each other. Any description of locale should arise easily and naturally out of the conversation. Suppose, for example, the scene was the same as that described above, and the characters were a young American Air Corps lieutenant and an English nurse. The following dialogue would adequately set the scene and still be completely acceptable.

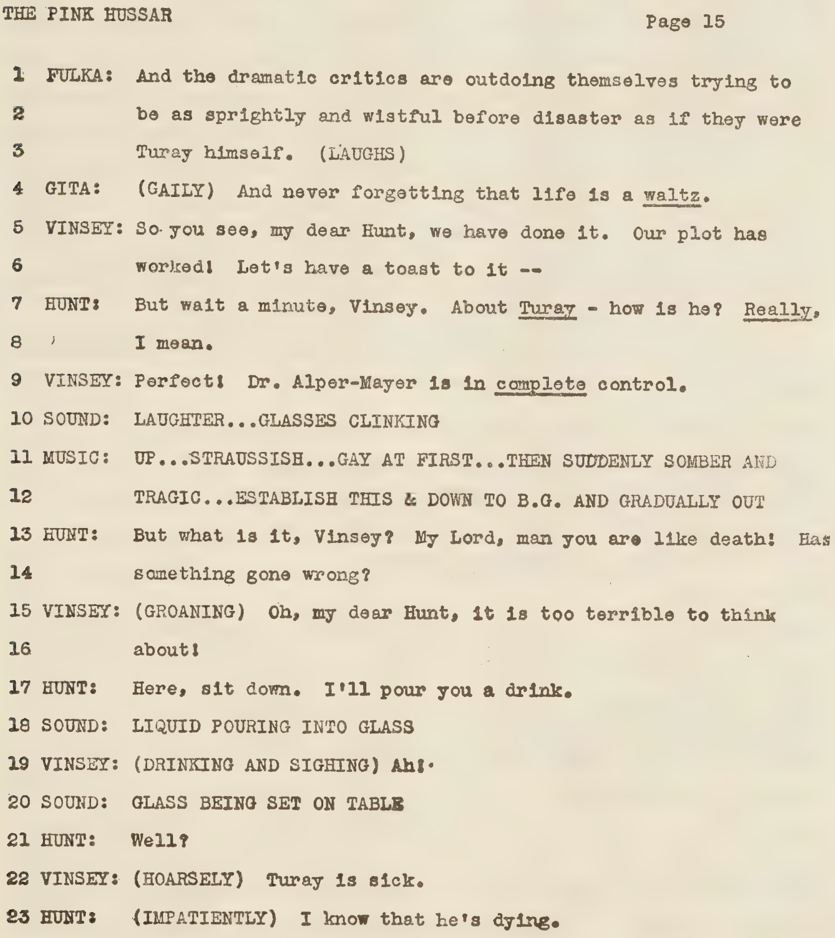
JOHNNY: So. That's the famous Avon, huh?
MARY: That's right, Johnny.
JOHNNY: What's that modernistic-looking building over there?
MARY: That's the Shakespeare Memorial Theater.
JOHNNY: Gee! A year ago, when I was reading about all that stuff in English Lit., I didn't think I'd be seeing it tonight.
MARY: It's funny, isn't it, how things change?
JOHNNY: Some things don't, though. That moon up there — same moon I've always seen. Same clouds. And they look just the same as they always did down by the creek back of Hamilton.
MARY: Hamilton?
JOHNNY: Yeah. That's a little town in Iowa where I live.

In the course of a half-hour radio play, the author may have to set the whole general locale, and possibly ten or twelve specific scenes within that locale. Conceivably the story might take place in two or three different general locales. In each case, no matter how many jumps are made, the author is obliged to orientate his audience in each new set of surroundings. Time cannot be taken from the major action to do this job. It must be an inherent and integral part of the scene.

WRITING DIALOGUE

Writing dialogue is one of the most difficult techniques to master. Writing in aural style is difficult, but writing dialogue is even more difficult, because of the number of factors which must be kept in mind during the process. The following suggestions are for the writer who is attacking the problem of dialogue for the first time.

The beginner will find it helpful to speak his lines before he writes them. This is the surest way to make them sound like speech rather than like a literary effort. All of the techniques discussed in the chapter on the aural style of writing have specific application here. In addition, several other techniques must be mastered before dialogue will have in it the breath of life.



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FULKA: And the dramatic critics are outdoing themselves trying to be as sprightly and wistful before disaster as if they were Turay himself. (LAUGHS)

GITA: (GAILY) And never forgetting that life is a *waltz*.

VINSEY: So you see, my dear Hunt, we have done it. Our plot has worked! Let's have a toast to it --

HUNT: But wait a minute, Vinsey. About *Turay* - how is he? *Really*, I mean.

VINSEY: Perfect! Dr. Alper-Mayer is in *complete* control.

SOUND: LAUGHTER...GLASSES CLINKING

MUSIC: UP...STRAUSSISH...GAY AT FIRST...THEN SUDDENLY SOMBER AND TRAGIC...ESTABLISH THIS & DOWN TO B.G. AND GRADUALLY OUT

HUNT: But what is it, Vinsey? My Lord, man you are like death! Has something gone wrong?

VINSEY: (GROANING) Oh, my dear Hunt, it is too terrible to think about!

HUNT: Here, sit down. I'll pour you a drink.

SOUND: LIQUID POURING INTO GLASS

VINSEY: (DRINKING AND SIGHING) Ah!

SOUND: GLASS BEING SET ON TABLE

HUNT: Well?

VINSEY: (HOARSELY) Turay is sick.

HUNT: (IMPATIENTLY) I know that he's dying.

Speeches in dialogue should be short. A beginner will tend to write long alternate speeches between two characters. Each character will say two or three sentences or more and then listen while the other character answers with another long speech. In real life, conversations do not take place in that way. Some conversations are conducted in monosyllables. In no case is a character likely to speak at length. A line of dialogue should rarely be longer than one typewritten line. If it is longer than two typewritten lines, there must be a special reason for it in the dramatic action. In no case must alternate speeches be two or more lines long. A practiced critic of radio writing can tell whether the dialogue is likely to be good or not without even reading it. He can look at the typing and see how frequently the names of characters occur. If there are only three or four speeches on the page, and each is long, he knows immediately that the writer has not written dialogue. He is writing literary English. In general, the best way to produce a feeling of natural dialogue is to give actors a quick interchange of lines, so that no one actor in the scene is speaking for more than several seconds at any one time.

Here is an example of a love scene done in monosyllables and completed in twenty-one lines!

JOAN: I liked the show. You were a lamb to take me.
PAXTON: I liked it too. I'm glad you'd come.
JOAN: Don't I usually come when you invite me?
PAXTON: Poor technique — but lots more fun.
JOAN: What are you thinking about?
PAXTON: You.
JOAN: Me?
PAXTON: Um-hum. (PAUSE.)
JOAN: Penny.
PAXTON: Raise you ten.
JOAN: Call you. What have you got?
PAXTON: One Queen.
JOAN: Me?
PAXTON: Um-hum.
JOAN: Got you beat.
PAXTON: What?

JOAN: King high.
PAXTON: Me?
JOAN: Um-hum.
PAXTON: Good. Let's keep it that way, Joan.
JOAN: Let's do.

The dialogue must sound like the normal speech of real persons. This is achieved first of all by proper word-choice. All the words must come from a speaking vocabulary instead of a reading vocabulary. Informal words will predominate. Words will tend to be short, simple, Anglo-Saxon words. The structure of sentences will be simple and loose. Most people, in ordinary conversation, do not speak in complex sentences. The tendency in speech is to go directly from subject to predicate. Sometimes sentences are long and rambling and loosely put together in dialogue, but they are seldom complex. Accordingly, this example would be poor dialogue.

DR. JONES: Because of the loss of blood, and because of the consequent shock, coupled with the fact that there is already an advanced case of anemia to deal with, I think any rigorous treatment is certainly not indicated at the moment.

The same ideas might be better expressed in dialogue form as follows:

DR. JONES: I don't think we'd better try any very strenuous treatment right now. She's lost a lot of blood, don't forget, and that's a shock. Besides, she's anemic, and that doesn't help matters any.

See how the use of shorter, simple sentences makes it sound more like natural conversation.

It is not even obligatory to use complete sentences. People in conversation often let sentences trail off without finishing them, thus:

ALICE: But what can we do? We can't just . . .
MARTHA: Just what?
ALICE: I don't know. I'm stumped. If only there was something . . .
MARTHA: Well, there isn't, and that's that.

Notice in the above example how characters can interrupt each other before sentences are completed. This, too, gives dialogue a feeling of reality and is a frequently used device. Sometimes it is well to stop a sentence in mid-flight and start off on another thought. If you are trying to depict a person who is somewhat inarticulate, or one who is up against a completely baffling situation, this kind of speech might result:

> But, Jeff . . . you can't just . . . well, I mean, what's the use . . .

This device can be used to clarify both character and situation.

The dramatist must write speeches which are "flub-free." That is to say, the speeches must be so written that they can be read easily and quickly. Lines which employ a difficult combination of vowels and consonants must be avoided. Unless considerable care is exercised, the "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers" kind of line will crop up frequently. The best way to catch such difficult lines is to read them aloud. If you can say them easily, an experienced actor certainly can. If you have trouble, however, tend to stumble, hesitate, or get mixed up in the reading of a line, you may have written a set of sounds which are difficult to articulate. It is true, of course, that people often misspeak in conversation, and it is permissible to plant such lines if they accomplish a useful purpose. It is the mark of the amateur, however, to write lines which will create undesired stumbling on the part of the actor. For example, try to read this line rapidly:

> strain tests prove that . . .

The *s*'s in that sentence must be approached deliberately to avoid either inarticulate hissing or overprecise pronunciation. One is as bad as the other. In a commercial recently, an actor came to this line and gave it very rough treatment:

> . . . woolens stay soft and fleecy . . .

In an Authors' Playhouse script, this line caused considerable trouble:

> . . . why not use your leapyear prerogative and propose?

Actors are, by and large, nice people, and should not be embarrassed in that way by writers. Watch, then, for ease of "readability."

Punctuation and style of typing should indicate to the actor how the line is to be read. Punctuation is, after all, only a series of signposts which should be used by the writer to clarify the construction of the sentence, and therefore, its meaning. In dialogue, it can serve the added purpose of indicating interpretation. Stress, emphasis, interpolations, and asides can all be clearly indicated by the manner in which a speech is typed and punctuated. The following lines indicate what a difference punctuation can make in interpretation.

> Of course John can go if he wants to.
> Of course. John can go – if he wants to.
> Of course. John can go if he wants to . . .
> Of course *John* can go – if he *wants* to.

The reader can devise three or four more of his own. In each case a different reading of the line is indicated by the punctuation or spacing. Presumably, the author has a definite reading in mind for every line he writes. It is his duty, therefore, to give the director and actor every possible indication of that reading. Thus, if he wishes a speech delivered stumblingly, he can type it like this:

> I can't . . . seem to . . . see . . . There's something . . . but . . .

The dots simply indicate a halting delivery. The motivation for that reading would presumably be furnished by the context of the scene. This means, of course, that every character in a script will have his own special punctuation to indicate the kind of reading for that speech, since each character should be fairly distinctive in his manner of speech. As discussed before, this is one of the techniques of character differentiation.

Dialogue differentiates characters

The strength or weakness of any dialogue can be measured only in terms of a specific situation, because, in the final analysis, dialogue must sound not only like real people talking, but also like the specific characters in the particular story under discussion. There are, then, no absolutes in the business of writing dialogue. Each character creates his own problems of dialogue; the merit of the lines can only be determined in the light of whether or not they make clear the character being created.

In the section on the creation of characters, it was stated that differentiation in characters can be created in dialogue by establishing:

1. Habitual word-choice
2. Habitual sentence length and structure
3. Habitual basic speech rhythms

These have already been separately illustrated, but they seldom appear separately in dialogue. Like the characteristics of sound itself, they seldom appear in isolated manifestation. Word-choice, sentence length and structure, and basic speech rhythm all are inherent in everything the character is made to say. Having stated the basic principles, let us consider some of the problems in dialogue created by the necessity of delineating character.

Your dialogue must be true to the picture of the character you have given the audience at the outset. You cannot tell an audience much about a truck-driver if you make him talk as would a college professor – unless, indeed, he is a very special kind of truck-driver. The writer of dialogue is using the same techniques that a person uses in making a character analysis. Those who pride themselves on being able to read character usually look for the same little cues which a good writer builds into his dialogue.

The creation of a straightforward character is a comparatively simple problem. When you need to create a complex character, however, the problem of revealing the character through dialogue grows in complexity. Suppose, for example, that you want to create a character outwardly calm and collected, but in reality highly nervous. His calm exterior is due only to iron self-discipline, which he exercises in spite of his inner feelings. You have a dual job. You must give your audience, in the character's dialogue, one set of clues which show him calm and collected. Then, by skillful manipulation of dialogue, you must show that inside he is really a different kind of person. This duality can be suggested in several ways. You might use a word-choice and sentence length which would indicate the exterior he shows to the world. At the same time the sentence structure and speech rhythm might belie the outward calm and indicate the nervous, sensitive soul underneath. Such a character might say:

> Now, Son, I want you to understand from the outset that I'm trying to see this thing from your point of view. I've looked at it every possible way — and I still can't see how you could have done such a thing. I simply can't. Couldn't you see — I mean, don't you know what that will lead to?

In this example, the speech starts with long sentences and careful word-choice. Then, in spite of the effort to remain calm, notice how the speech rhythm gets choppier, how the smooth structure breaks up into shorter bits, and the word-choice even gets simpler, and the obvious worry in the man's mind comes more to the surface.

This same problem of duality might also be shown by establishing the calm side of the character under normal circumstances and then letting the audience see the other side of the character when the circumstances of the plot become more trying. In this case the audience draws one set of conclusions from the man's dialogue in one circumstance and a completely different set when it sees the character in different circumstances. This treatment is easier to handle than that which attempts to show the duality of character in a single scene or single speech. However, both techniques may be used.

Suppose we illustrate these principles. Let us see if we can create a lower-middle-class female hypochondriac.

> MAMIE (SHE SPEAKS IN A NASAL WHINE): Honest to goodness, it seems like it's just one thing after another. I told Jim this

> morning, I didn't know what we was goin' t' do. I just can't seem t' get any energy. Just feel draggy all the time.

The feeling of exhaustion is partly implied by the lazy speech. The low-grade grammar helps to set the educational level. Clichés help to establish the general environment of the character and the subject matter of the lines establishes her concern for her health. Simple short sentences also give the feeling that the character is too tired or too lazy to make an extended effort.

Perhaps our problem is to create the picture of a mellow, elderly college professor who has grown old gracefully. He loves his students and is loved by them. There is no meanness in his makeup. He is gentle, kind, and still intellectually honest. So we have him say:

> I wonder sometimes about the wisdom of my way of life. It *is*, you know, an ivory-tower kind of existence. Yes, I suppose I have lived a very sheltered life.

Analyze that speech to see whether it will carry out the principles we have stated. First of all, notice the choice of words. Many are bread-and-butter words which any character might use. There are at least three words and one phrase which would probably not be chosen by anyone except an individual with a considerable amount of education and an excellent vocabulary. The words "wisdom," "existence," "ivory tower," and "sheltered" are all words which would not be used by a streetcar conductor. A hard-boiled businessman might say, instead of that first sentence, "I don't think I'm so smart!" The character we want to create "wonders about the wisdom of his way of life." The reference to an ivory tower is a literary reference which would certainly not be used by one who lacked a literary background. A less-educated person would probably use the word "life" instead of "existence." The very choice of the word "sheltered" indicates something of the gentleness and lack of malice in the character we are trying to create. Most of the rest of the words in that speech are common words which would be used by almost anyone. Those four, however, help to set the character. Now look at the sentence length. None of the sentences are very short. Still, they are not long and verbose. The length of sentences and the fact that they are all approximately the same length indicate a certain deliberateness of approach which would be unlikely in a younger person. They do not indicate hurry or worry. Now consider the sentence structure. It marks the professor as a scholarly, rather careful individual. In the second sentence, the insertion of "you know" gives the sentence an unhurried and premeditated structure. It is not a sentence which could be dashed off. He had thought about what he wanted to say before he said it. The result is that he constructed the sentence the way he wanted it to sound. Suppose he had said, "Y'know, it's an ivory-tower kind of existence." This change would make the speech more abrupt, more rapid in reading, and less premeditated in structure. It's the way a younger man who talks faster and without thinking might state it. Finally, and most important of all in this example, there is the use of rhythm. There is an over-all rhythmic flow to the entire speech which is unhurried, regular, and still simple. The leisurely pace of the inherent rhythms in the line do much to help create the kind of picture we should like to paint in the minds of our audience.

There is always the danger of analyzing the life out of a piece of writing. There is always the danger, too, of reading into a set of lines the things you want to appear in them. Between these two dangers, analysis can be a tricky thing. However, to the beginning writer these matters are important. They are basic techniques upon which he will build his whole art of projecting characters. He must be sensitive to all the elements of dialogue if he is to create characters that are clear and acceptable.

Let us take another example. Suppose we are trying to create a hard-driving, uncompromising, self-made, middle-aged businessman. We want to show vigor and definiteness of action. We want to show a mind that works quickly and with no doubt about the rightness of procedure. We give him a speech like this:

> I don't want excuses. I want action! Have that load laid down here by five o'clock! !

Everything in this example helps to reveal the character. Notice the choice of words. There are only three two-syllable words. All the others have one syllable. They are definite words. They are hard words. They are words that get to the point. Just by way of example, substitute the word "wish" for want in the first sentence. "I do not wish excuses." Taking out the contraction and substituting "wish" for "want" would change the entire characterization. It illustrates the importance of the right choice of words in creating a character. Look at the sentence length. There is not an excess word in any one of them. The thing has been pared to the bone. The length of those sentences says more strongly than any exposition, "Here is a man who does not waste words. He has a lot to do and not enough time to do it in, and he doesn't want to be cluttered up by inefficiency." He does not use a single unnecessary word. The sentence structure bears out the same message. It is the simplest possible. There is subject, verb, object – nothing more! The same thing is true of the sentence rhythm. It is hard, sharp, driving, abrupt. The ending of each rhythm beat is sharp. All the elements of composition conspire to produce a picture of the kind of man that we want to create.

Let us see if it is possible to create a duality of characterization. Suppose we want to create the picture of a mouselike man who is completely mild. He accepts all sorts of insults from everyone and will do anything to avoid an argument. That is the basic character we wish to create. But in addition, we wish to tell the audience that he has been pushed beyond even his limits of endurance. He is ready to make a fight for his rights. Let us see if it would be possible to incorporate those two incompatible ideas in one speech and still give the audience the impression that we wish it to have. We might have him say something like this:

> Now . . . well . . . you won't like this, Mr. Johnston, but you see this isn't the kind of thing . . . well, I won't do it! I simply won't!

In this case the word-choice is not so important as in the previous examples. At least none of the words in the quotation are unusual. All of them, however, catch the character outlined. Sentence length and sentence structure are the points here which work most strongly in portraying the character. Notice the long, disjointed, hesitant first sentence. It is a sentence whose length and structure mirror a man trying to make up his mind to do something to which he is unaccustomed. Notice the abrupt change of rhythm, word-choice, sentence length, and tone of the last two phrases. They are the expression of a desperate man who rebels in the strongest way he knows. Even here, however, the rebellion is comparatively gentle. It may be determined, but its expression is in fairly simple, unassuming language. By combining the two styles of sentences and the two structures we can create the duality of character which we set out to do in this instance. The long, rambling, circuitous introduction topped off by the short, definite statement do the job.

Dialogue must match the region

Not only must dialogue be right for the individual character; it must be right for the region and the period. To write dialogue which is regional in flavor may seem a difficult assignment, since everyone in the United States speaks the same language. It is, however, pronounced differently in different localities, and each section of the country has its own special expressions. Regional pronunciation which can be indicated by phonetic spelling and regional idiom are the writer's best ways of giving dialogue a local flavor. Local idiom should not be an obvious use of trite, shopworn phrases, such as "Ya' suhs" and "you-alls" to represent southern speech. This superficial use of a few expressions fools no one. The speech of any region is colored by the work of the people and by the idiom which is indigenous to their way of life. In cattle country a certain amount of "round-up" terminology and idiom built on animal habits ("high-tailing") will creep into the everyday speech of people who are not engaged in raising or selling cattle. The same thing is true of mining districts or of any other part of the country which is dominated by a certain occupation. Farmers betray themselves with a hundred small references to their occupation. So do city dwellers, teachers, and dock-wallopers. These colorful speech idioms and folk sayings, if carefully chosen, can be used to create vivid and authentic regional dialogue. Not all the characters in a play will come from the same region. A dramatist might have to write speeches for representatives of five or six different regions in the course of one thirty-minute play. In such a case his job becomes truly complex, but this very difference in regional speech will serve as a further technique in identifying the various places in which the play takes place.

Here is a typical page of well-written dialogue which skillfully conveys a sense of region and a kind of people.

SOUND: SMALL GARAGE NOISES — HAMMERING — FADING BEHIND FOR FOOTSTEPS ON GRAVEL.

OLD HEN (PEEVISHLY): Hello, Quincy, you seen my man, Benny, this week?

QUINCY: He was in four days ago, Old Hen, having the front wheels put back under the Model-T, and the dirt fished out of the front of the radiator.

OLD HEN: How'd all that happen?

QUINCY: Seems he saw Doc walking across a plowed field and took out after him in the Ford — cross-furrow. Doc said the front wheels folded under like one of them folding baby-carriages in the catalogue, and it plowed along like a hog rooting for turnips.

OLD HEN (VEXED): Cutting the fool again! Have you seen him since?

QUINCY: Ain't seen, but I heard from folks passing through.

OLD HEN: Where is he?

QUINCY: The bread-driver said he saw him 'gatoring down in Alligator Creek three days ago.

OLD HEN: And?

QUINCY: MacCullum said he was with somebody afore yesterday catching crabs down to Salt Springs.

OLD HEN (RESIGNED): Go on.

QUINCY: Tom Bailey saw him last night up to the square dance in the flatwoods.

OLD HEN: Anybody seen him today?

This page of dialogue was taken from Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's short story, *Uncle Benny and the Bird Dog,* and was adapted for radio by Christine Metropolis. There are no less than twenty cues to the locale and the kind of people in it, all quite naturally built into this bit from the opening of the show. References to "'gatoring" and "catching crabs" and "flatwoods" are all casual but authentic clues to locale. Notice the idioms. Such terms as "cross-furrow" and "hog rooting for turnips" are natural and right. Even the names of the people produce the right effect.

Here is another example of a different sort. The author's problem in this case was to create a speech pattern that would give an authentic picture of a group of transplanted Viennese, living in New York's Greenwich Village. The scene is taken from a story by Ben Hecht which was adapted for *Author's Playhouse* by June Rachuy. Again the skillful use of idiom, sentence structure, and figures of speech convey an authentic impression of a group of this particular type of refugees.

Notice that the author has indicated no dialect. There is no attempt at a phonetic indication of pronunciation. Yet, an accomplished group of actors would have no trouble reading these lines in Viennese dialect because the speech rhythms, the figures of speech, the word-choice, and grammatical construction all suggest this dialect.

VINSEY: It is not the medicine, Hunt. It is the shock. Turay found out he was dying. Somebody must have left a newspaper by the bed. He reads it while he was only half-drugged. A sensitive soul like his! A mind so delicate, so open to phenomena! It reads he is dying. And he dies. It is psychological murder. We are a committee of murderers.

HUNT: What's being done?

VINSEY (WEAKLY): Gita and Marisoa have gone to church to pray. Fulka wants to give herself up to the police. Doctor Alper-Mayer has ordered some kind of life-saving apparatus. And

Lazlo and I have agreed to be buried on the same day with Turay — one on each side.

HUNT: Come, finish your drink. I'll go with you to the hospital.

MUSIC: UP . . . A SLOW AND TRAGIC IMITATION OF A WALTZ . . . HOLD . . . THEN DOWN AND OUT.

SOUND: WOMAN SOBBING.

FULKA: Listen to the critics now (READING) (VOICE HUSKY WITH GRIEF): "The scene around the dying playwright is a page out of Murger's *La Vie de Bohème.* It is a wake of wit. Each of his old cronies vie with the other in gay reminiscences of Turay's spicy sixty-two years. Jests fly and chuckles sound, but behind the mirth is the tear of a waltz ending."

VINSEY (GROANING): That . . . was yesterday.

One of the most difficult assignments is the task of writing period dialogue. How can a modern writer know what normal across-the-back-fence conversation was like in Boston in 1760? The writer can, however, be reasonably sure that if he does not know what the dialogue of those times was, neither does the audience! His only task then is to produce something which will pass for dialogue of the given period and which will give the audience the flavor of the speech of that time. While the speech as it is shown in Victorian novels is probably considerably more stilted and artificial than was the actual conversation of people who lived in those times, still it does furnish a clue with which a skillful writer could create an illusion of characters speaking in that period.

Ira Marion attempted an adaptation of Lafcadio Hearn's short story *The Soul of the Great Bell,* which turned out to be excellent radio. The scene of this story is laid in China five hundred years ago. This sample shows how Marion solved the problem of period dialogue.

SOUND: CROSS-FADE UP SOUNDS OF ANCIENT METAL-WORKING ESTABLISHMENT: ANVILS, HISSING POTS OF MOLTEN METAL, OCCASIONAL SMALL BELL SOUNDS, MEN'S VOICES.

CHANG (FADING ON MIKE OVER SOUND): Most honored master —

KOUAN-YU: Well, Chang . . . what is it?

CHANG: Most honored master of this court of metal-workers, this unworthy person brings word that in the outer room awaits a high personage who bears a packet on which is the seal of the All-Highest, the Son of Heaven.

KOUAN-YU: I will go to him at once. . . . Have wine brought, and rice cakes . . .

CHANG (FADING OFF MIKE): It is already accomplished, master . . .

SOUND: METAL GATE CLANGS OPEN, THEN SHUT — BACKGROUND SOUNDS CUT OFF — FOOTSTEPS ON WOODEN FLOOR — DOOR OPEN AND SHUT FIRMLY.

KOUAN-YU: You are welcome in the unworthy house of this humble molder of metals . . .

MESSENGER (FADING ON MIKE): I bow before the most worthy official, Youan-Yu.

KOUAN-YU: My simple abode is not fit for the messenger of the Celestially August, the Son of Heaven.

MESSENGER: To your skilled hand I bring the command of the Mighty Yong-Lo, of the illustrious Ming Dynasty.

KOUAN-YU: I prostrate myself before the hand and seal of the All-Highest Emperor of the Kingdom.

Writers often fall back on obvious and probably unauthentic speech mannerisms to portray a given period of time. Probably the best solution of such a problem is to use straight English without any current slang and try to make the audience forget about the period by not struggling too hard on it.

Finally, the writer must see that his dialogue not only displays the characters, but their emotional states in any given situation. In other words, dialogue has two jobs. This is another point at which beginners often bog down. They fail to realize the basic speech habits of individuals and let their characters speak lines which are completely out of order in a given situation. The lines may be right lines for that particular character, in terms of his basic character, but they may not be right for him in a given situation. A character will speak one kind of dialogue when he is in a gay, light-hearted mood. He will speak in quite another manner when he is proposing to his future wife. He may speak in still a different way when he gets news of the death of his mother. In other words, the dialogue must not only conform to the character but to the situation.

One of the first things the beginning writer must learn is that in highly emotional situations people talk very little. In the face of the great moments in life, there is little that can be said. After the dialogue has reached the point in a love scene where the man says, "I love you," where does it go from there? There is only one line from that point to the clinch. People in love, or professing their love for the first time, do not make long, involved speeches; they are usually inarticulate. Most people have had the experience of trying to say something consoling to a friend who has just lost a loved one. What is there to say? One can only mumble some polite but perhaps insincere statement, as "He is better off that way." When birth and death and all the other great experiences in life touch you deeply, they cannot be fully expressed. If the writer can learn to use the same restraint in building dialogue which the individual practices in speaking in real life, he will have mastered an important skill.

The writer must listen to people. He must watch situations of various kinds and see how people react and how they talk. Trying to write lines which will tell the audience that a man is intoxicated, or that he is insane, or that he is stricken with great grief are all highly complex problems which strain the creative skill. But they are problems that make the writing of dialogue fascinating.

The tools of sound effects and music have already been discussed in some detail in Chapter 6. Both sound and music are important in radio drama and can do much to make it effective. What they can do and what they should do has been outlined. The basic principles of their use apply more directly to drama than to most other types of programs, but they offer basically the same problems.

All these tools, available to the radio dramatist, are important. Nearly all will be used in every dramatic program. Perhaps a dramatic program could be written without using sound effects or music, but the writer would handicap himself seriously if he forswore the use of these two tools. All tools —

theme, plot characters, setting, dialogue, sound, and music — have their place. The tools which will receive the most attention from the radio dramatist will depend entirely upon his material. Some stories are designed almost completely for their story-line. The plot is then the most important problem. Unusual characters may be the chief source of interest in a script. In fact, theme, plot, or any of the other tools may, from time to time or from play to play, become the most important item. Which of these various elements gets the most attention from the writer will depend entirely on the kind of play and his purpose. His innate sense of theatrical judgment will tell him where the main stress must come. His sense of theater will tell him which of these tools will be most useful to him in any given drama.

CHAPTER 16

PROBLEMS OF WRITING IN THE DRAMATIC FORM

How Programs Open

Every writer attempting his first play for radio bumps into a few realistic problems which we have not yet discussed. How, for instance, does one begin a radio program? What comes first? I once asked this question of one of my classes that was having a particularly difficult time in beginning their scripts. No one had an answer. One timid soul finally suggested that the first thing to do was introduce the characters.

"No," said I. "Before that, what must happen?"

"Set the scene?" another ventured.

"No. Not first. Now, see here," I said, getting a little desperate, "when you tune in your radio at the beginning of a program – you've all done that – what is the very first thing you hear?"

Suddenly the mantle of inspiration settled on the shoulders of a girl in the front row. Her face lit up like a Kansas sunflower, and she held up her hand.

"Well," I said, "what's the first thing you hear?"

"Bong, bong, bong," she chanted happily, giving a reasonable facsimile of the NBC chimes.

There seems to be something particularly difficult about getting the first two minutes of the program on paper. Our over-all aim is to get into the conflict of our plot as quickly as possible. There are, however, certain obligations which must be fulfilled in the opening of a program. These obligations might be listed as follows:

1. We must identify the program.
2. We should give the audience a few seconds to settle down and prepare to listen.
3. We must furnish them with the essential program notes.

4. In the case of a sponsored program, we must introduce an opening commercial.
5. We must set the opening scene.
6. We must introduce the first characters who speak.

Programs can be identified by name and by some kind of theme. By using these two devices together, we can accomplish both of the first two objectives at once. Whether it is a standard sound effect, or music, or an announcement, it will serve to identify the program and give the audience a chance to settle down. Under the heading of program notes for a dramatic show, the audience will want to know the name of the play, perhaps the name of the author, and possibly the names of the star actors, and the sponsors of the program. Sometimes the name of the producer of the program is also given.

In a fifteen-minute sponsored program, the usual practice is to use two commercials – one at the beginning and one at the end. In a half-hour sponsored program, a third commercial is sometimes inserted at the midpoint to provide a break into two acts and keep anyone of the commercials from seeming too long. In any case, on a sponsored program a commercial must be introduced during the opening seconds.

Finally, we have to give the audience enough facts to know what all the shooting is about and where it is taking place. We must place a locale and introduce the audience, however briefly, to the people who open the first scene.

All these matters are standard obligations of which the writer must dispose in order to get his program properly under way. There is no set way of doing it. On the other hand, given these rigid requirements, there are comparatively few ways of meeting them. The material can be reshuffled in just so many ways. And it all takes just so much time, which eventually gets down to an irreducible minimum.

The most usual order is this: (1) theme; (2) name of program; (3) commercial; (4) lead-in; (5) first scene. Here is a sample of how that order of events looks in script form. Check this by listening to a program and seeing how it sounds.

MUSIC: THEME.
ANNOUNCER: The Guiding Light!
MUSIC: THEME UP AGAIN AND END.
ANNOUNCER: The Guiding Light, brought to you by General Mills. (TWO SECONDS PAUSE.)
ANNOUNCER: OPENING COMMERCIAL (ONE MINUTE).

Listeners to daytime serials will be familiar with the opening on *Road of Life*, which starts each day with the nurse calling on the public address system in a hospital, "Dr. Brent . . . Call surgery. Dr. Brent . . . Call surgery. Dr. Brent . . . Call Surgery," followed by the announcer giving the title, "Road of Life," and going into theme. This opening is only a slight variation of the order shown above. The difference is that an identifying set of lines is coupled with the title.

Any other order of handling opening material is considered a specialized attempt to break away from the standard routine. There several variations on these openings which may serve as interesting patterns. For example, NBC produces a program in co-operation with the National Congress of Parents and Teachers called *The Baxters* which has a rather unusual and effective opening. Here is one:

ANNOUNCER: The Baxters! Adventures on the home front with those neighbors of yours . . . Marge, Bill, Bud, Janie, and Sandy . . . the Baxter family . . .
SOUND: TELEPHONE BELL FADE IN . . . INSISTENT.
MARGE (CALLS) (SLIGHTLY OFF MIKE): There's the telephone again, Janie!
JANIE (ON MIKE): I'll get it, Mom!
MARGE: If it's the same man . . . tell him Daddy'll be home any minute now!
JANIE: Yes . . .
SOUND: RECEIVER UP.
JANIE: Hello? Why, no, sir . . . he isn't . . . he ought to be home any minute now, though . . . Yes . . . Yes, I'll have him call you right away . . . 'Bye.
SOUND: RECEIVER DOWN.
JANIE (UP): It was that man, Mom! Wanted to speak to Dad . . .

MARGE (FADE IN): I can't imagine where Dad is . . . taken him an awfully long time to get home . . .

JANIE: The man sounded awfully excited . . . He said something had happened down at the plant . . .

MARGE: Oh, my . . .

SOUND: DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES OFF MIKE.

MARGE: Maybe that's Dad now . . . Bill, that you coming in?

BILL (OFF): Yep . . . Me in person! (FADE IN.) How's everything?

MARGE: Bill, dear . . . Mr. Lewis has called you twice in the last half-hour.

BILL: Mr. Lewis?

MARGE: Yes . . . He sounded very upset about something . . . he wanted you to call him the minute you got home . . . The number's written on the telephone book.

BILL: I see it.

SOUND: RECEIVER UP.

BILL: Operator . . . ? Maple . . . two – one – seven – three . . . that's right.

MARGE: I hope it doesn't mean you have to go down there and do some work . . . this is the first Saturday afternoon you've had off for so . . .

BILL: Hello? . . . Mr. Lewis? This is Baxter . . . Mrs. Baxter said you've been trying to get me . . . No, I haven't heard about it . . . Well, sure, I'll go down and check . . . on the West side of the lot . . . ? All right . . . I'll go down there right away! Good-bye, sir . . .

SOUND: RECEIVER DOWN.

MARGE: Well . . . what is it?

BILL: Why, it sounds like there's been an accident down at the plant!

JANIE: What kind of an accident?

BILL: I don't know exactly . . . somebody's fallen down into one of the pits we're digging out there for the machinery and foundation of the new building . . .

MARGE: Oh, Bill . . . were they hurt?

BILL: I don't know if they've even got her out yet . . . the foreman told Lewis she's stuck under some dirt or boards or something . . .

MARGE: Got "her" out . . . Is it a woman?

BILL: It's a little girl . . .

MARGE: A child?

JANIE: Golly! Who is she?

BILL: I don't know any more about it than you do . . . But I'd better hop a bus and get down there now . . . (BOARD FADE). Be able to tell you more later . . .

ANNOUNCER: Well, there goes Bill out the door . . . as Marge says, it's been a long time since he's had a Saturday afternoon off to just rest . . . and I guess this Saturday isn't going to be any exception with the news of the accident down at the defense plant. In a minute we'll find out just who this child is . . . and what's happened to her . . . But now for our new listeners I'd just like to mention that the Baxters are presented by the National Broadcasting Company, the stations affiliated with the NBC Network, and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. Later we'll hear from our Voice of the PTA, Mrs. Eva Grant, who will sum up the answers and solutions to the problem experienced in our Baxter family story. But now to go back and see what's happened since Bill heard about the accident . . . It's much later . . . almost seven o'clock, in fact, and Marge and Janie are driving down in the car to call for Bill . . .

This program uses no music and gets under way as quickly as possible. A three-line announcement identifies the program, and it plunges immediately into the story proper. Every care is made to identify the characters as completely as possible, so that new listeners will not be lost in the abrupt opening. Once having got under way, the writer [1] takes time out to do the opening commercial, which in this case is an acknowledgment of the co-operating agencies that make the program possible. This is followed by the short comments on the day's story and a very brief scene set for the following portion of the program. This form has the virtue of a very fast start. If it has a weakness, it is that it does not allow an audience much time to settle down. To offset this difficulty, the first few lines are not usually of vital importance to the plot.

Author's Playhouse uses an interesting device to capture interest in its opening. Being a sustaining program, there is no commercial; the opening of this program looks like this in script form:

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[1] Miss Madeliene Clark of the NBC continuity department, Chicago.

MUSIC: OPENING THEME UP FOR FIFTEEN SECONDS AND CUT COLD.
ANNOUNCER: Author's Playhouse!
MUSIC: THEME IN SHARPLY, HOLD BRIEFLY AND FADE UNDER TO BACKGROUND.
KNOWLES: Once . . . I was hunted . . . and somebody . . . gave me my freedom . . . You couldn't possibly understand that . . . what it's like to be hunted, or what it's like to be free again . . . but I can.
MUSIC: UPS SWIFTLY TO CLIMAX AND FADES UNDER TO BACKGROUND FOR
ANNOUNCER: This is the story of a man whose mind snapped and of how he came back to the world he had once known and cherished. It is a tale, too, of a woman's love for this man. Author's Playhouse presents Frederick J. Lipp's story — "Cry for the Hunted."
MUSIC: SWEEPS TO CLIMAX AND ENDS.
SOUND: DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES.
VOICE: . . . Well, Doctor?
DOCTOR: Here's the case records . . . I'll want to see him again, of course.
VOICE: Did he talk — very much?
DOCTOR: A little. Not enough to help us any.
VOICE: Do you think Knowles will pull out of it?
DOCTOR (SLOWLY): . . . I don't know. There's so little we have to go on. He's been through a terrible experience. . . .

This opening uses a very short teaser, usually lifted bodily from a scene later in the script, which is calculated to pique the audience's interest without giving away too much of the plot. It has the virtue of getting to at least a suggestion of the story very quickly. Since there is no scene-set and no introduction of characters, the dialogue must make plain in the opening lines who the characters are and where they are. The opening lines must also get the plot under way as soon as possible. From the first six lines of this script it is easy to determine that the scene is in a hospital, that the characters are two doctors, and that the case is a mental one. We can assume, even as early as this, that the person about whom they are speaking is the central character of the story. Thus, the audience is told much in a few lines.

When sound effects or music is used in such opening sequences for purposes other than for theme or standard opening effects, the mood of the sound and music must not only be suitable, but actively help to set the opening "feel" of the script.

If introductions must be long because of commercials or of detailed credits or explanations, they must be deft and expert. Although this material is obligatory, it should not be done in a routine manner. Because introductions are obligatory, there is all the more reason to study them carefully and make them interesting and catchy.

First Scenes and Scene Openings

The first scene of a dramatic show is a critical one. The opening of every scene presents certain problems and certain obligations. The opening lines of each should make clear at once the locale and the identity of the characters in the scene. The first scene in a play has the additional burden of setting the mood and pace of the entire show. This problem is worth some careful study.

If sound can be used to help set a scene and can be made a legitimate part of it, by all means use it. References to the locale in the opening dialogue may be used if they can be brought in naturally. They must not sound obvious and "dragged in." Do not be guilty of opening a scene in such a crude manner as this:

MAN: Well, here we are at LaGuardia airport.
WOMAN: Yes. Aren't the planes interesting?

A more subtle handling of the same problem might run something like this:

MAN: Come on, Sue. You're always holding up the parade.
WOMAN: Don't rush so, Jim. I'm walking just as fast as I can.
VOICE (ECHO OVER A PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM): Flight three from

Chicago coming in at gate eleven. Flight three from Chicago coming in at gate eleven.

MAN: Come on, Sue! That's Harry's plane coming in now.

WOMAN: Now, Jim. Don't get excited. Harry's been in New York before. He won't get lost!

These lines set the locale just as well as the other sample, they are not so obvious, and, in addition, they indicate something about the characters of these two people. Incidentally, they identify the characters by name. As far as mood is concerned, the lines above could lead to little but light comedy. They would certainly not do for a tragedy. If the mood of the show were to be light and flippant, however, these lines would set the desired mood.

An opening scene should also start the major conflict of the story as soon as possible and introduce the audience to the protagonist and antagonist. The unconscious desire to tell a story in chronological order, even when the necessity for interesting the audience at once may dictate another order of narration, probably accounts for the many slow starts in dramas. Psychologically, it is better to get the major conflict under way early, even if it means going back to explain the situation more in detail later on.

In the discussion of plot, an outline was given for the script of *A Fairy Called Maggie*. Here is the first scene of that story. It is a rather good example of a story that gets under way quickly. A narrator is used to set the scene so that as soon as the dialogue starts, it can take up the story immediately. Conflict is implicit in the first line of dialogue; as the scene progresses, the audience quickly senses which is the protagonist and which is the antagonist. At the end of the eighth speech, the audience's loyalty is enlisted for Mike, and the story is under way. Here is how the actual dialogue looked:

NARRATOR: Now let's see. First of all, I want you to meet Michael Day. Mike is president, general manager, sole owner, and driver of the Day Trucking Company. Assets . . . one truck, one office garage, and a helper named Joe. Liabilities: one

Irish temper and a lot of hard luck. Mike's in his office now, with Joe, talking to a business rival, one Butch Johnson. And the conversation roughly runs something like this:

MIKE: Listen, you big lug. I want them tires!

JOE: Now, take it easy, Mike. Don't git mad.

MIKE: Shut up, Joe. Well . . . what do you say, Butch? Do I get 'em or do I . . .

BUTCH: Now, wait a minute, Mike. That's what I came to tell you. They wouldn't deliver them tires I ordered. The set you gave me is on my truck.

MIKE: Well, take 'em off.

BUTCH: Oh, I couldn't do that. I'm buyin' 'em. Here's the dough. An' thanks a lot, pal.

MIKE: I don't want dough. I want tires. You said if I'd loan you the set I had, you'd give me yours when they came.

BUTCH: That's what I'm a-tellin' ya, stupid. They didn't come. An' they won't come. Now I've already used yours, an' you wouldn't think of takin' them back now. So I'm buyin' 'em. See? An' thanks again, Mike. So long.

MIKE: Hey, you. Wait!

SOUND: DOOR OPENS AND SLAMS SHUT — CHAIR PUSHED BACK AND CRASHES OVER.

MIKE: Why, you . . . Hey, Butch. Come back here.

SOUND: DOOR OPENS AGAIN . . . SOUND OF TRUCK STARTING FAST.

MIKE: Hey, Butch! You . . .

SOUND: TRUCK TAKES OFF AND FADES BEHIND NEXT LINES.

BUTCH (OFF): Thanks for the tires, Mike!

MIKE: Come back here! . . . Why, that low-down, under-slung, oil-burning, road-hoggin' son of a Swede!

JOE (WHISTLES): Not bad, Boss. You know what? I don't like that guy.

MIKE: You don't? You know what?

JOE: No. What?

MIKE: You talk too much.

JOE: Oh . . . tanks.

MIKE: And you know what else I think?

JOE: No. What?

MIKE: I think Butch Johnson never had them tires ordered. I think he just told me that to get that spare set I had.

JOE: You mean he . . .

MIKE: Yeah . . . And so help me, I'm gonna lift that lug's scalp with a monkey wrench.

JOE: Ya can't use it fer rubber. An' right now them tires on Timothy is so thin, I can run over a dime and tell whether it's heads or tails. Say, Mike, how come you named that truck Timothy?

MIKE: I named it after my grandfather on m' mother's side. He was one Mick that nuthin' wouldn't stop. Well . . . let's move.

JOE: Where we goin'?

MIKE: We're drivin' out to the Camp to get that contract for haulin' grub. Them soldiers gotta eat.

JOE: Look, Mike. Can't we git some kind of an O'Rarity on them tires?

MIKE: It ain't O'Rarity, Joe. It's priority.

JOE: I knew it was somethin' Irish-soundin'.

MIKE: Well, it ain't Irish and we ain't got it. But if we can get that Camp contract, maybe that'll rate us some tires.

JOE: I don't get it.

MIKE: You don't have to. Beat it, Joe. Get Timothy rollin'. We're goin' to Camp!

MUSIC: IN CLEAN BUILD TO PEAK AND THEN FADE OUT.

SCENE ENDINGS

Particular care must be taken with scene endings. The ending of a scene should establish the mood and feel with which the author wants the audience to leave the scene. Should the scene end quietly and simply? Should it end in a burst of suspense? Should the audience feel a tremendous urgency for the next scene? Should it end in deep human suffering? Whatever the key on which the writer wishes to end the scene, the material must be carefully designed to accomplish this end.

There are several ways to end a scene. They can be listed somewhat like this:

1. The last line can be faded into silence.
2. The last line can be faded almost out and then quiet music faded in.
3. The last line can be quiet, but in normal volume, followed by music in the same mood.
4. A highly dramatic last line can be covered by a

climax of sound if sound can be made a legitimate part of the scene.

5. A highly dramatic line can be given at high volume, followed immediately by a dramatic, forceful music cue.

6. A low, but intense line can be immediately followed by a "stinger cue" of music in the same mood – low, but intense.

There are no circumstances that I can think of in which it would be effective to end a scene with a high dramatic line, unsupported. The scene would sound unfinished or cut off by mistake. Neither is it good drama to mix moods between lines and music. A highly dramatic line, followed by light, frivolous music, would create confusion in the minds of the audience. Which of the techniques listed above is chosen to end any particular scene will depend, of course, on the impression the author wants to leave with the audience and the dramatic materials with which he has to work.

If the author wishes to create the impression that the scene is continuing, but that the audience is leaving it for the time being, this impression can be best created by fading the scene. Then a silent transition may be used, or music may be faded in to establish the mood of the next scene, depending on context and upon what immediately follows. If this device for ending a scene is used, the audience must feel that what is blotted out is of no particular interest. If the audience feels that something interesting is going to happen, it naturally would want to hear it. When the device of fading is used, an unimportant line or lines must be provided on which to make the fade, so that the audience misses nothing essential.

Here is an example of such an ending. Suppose that the scene has to do with trying to escape across a river from some imminent danger. The preceding dialogue establishes the fact that the characters have only fifteen minutes in which to escape. They discover enough pieces of wood to lash together a makeshift raft, but at least ten minutes will be needed to put it together. The author can seldom afford to spend ten minutes marking time while this piece of business is accomplished. Here is a good place for a fade-out on a scene ending, which will give the impression that the scene is really continuing, but that the audience is leaving it for the ten minutes when nothing is happening but the lashing together of the raft. The scene ending might be cast into dialogue in this way:

JOHN: Have you got enough rope to make it?
JIM: We'll have to make it do. It's the only way. Here, give me some of that wood.
JOHN: Right. And hurry, Jim. If we don't, it'll be too late.
JIM: And how! (START FADE.) Give me some short ones now to put crosswise. Thanks. Boy, what a mess! (SCENE OUT BY HERE.)

Then after a three-to-five-second silence, we fade back in on the same activity and the raft is all ready to launch. We have used a transition to bridge uninteresting business and keep the story moving.

As another example in a different mood, suppose there has just been a rather stormy scene between a mother and her three-year-old son in which he suddenly capitulates to her demands that he go to sleep. He curls up in his bed and says . . .

BOBBY (SMALL VOICE): I'm sleepy now, Mommy.
MOTHER: Well, it's about time.
BOBBY: Good night, Mommy.
MOTHER: Good night, Bobby. (QUIETLY) Daddy'll be here in the morning. So sleep tight.
BOBBY (ALMOST GONE): I will. Night, night.
PAUSE.
MUSIC: VERY QUIETLY THE STRAINS OF BRAHMS' LULLABY SNEAK IN, ESTABLISH AND THEN SEGUE TO MUSIC SUITABLE FOR THE FOLLOWING SCENE.

In this case the scene gets quieter and quieter until it simply stops, and then, after a pause, the music picks up the mood very quietly and ends it.

Sometimes climactic sound can best bring a scene to its high point and end it. Suppose two soldiers have sneaked behind enemy lines to blow up a bridge. The scene preceding the climax is taut with quiet but feverish excitement as the men work under the very noses of enemy patrols to wire the bridge and lash explosive blocks to strategic spots. The two men finish the job and are sneaking back toward the charger box to explode it when they are discovered by a patrol at the opposite end of the bridge (a scene more than faintly reminiscent of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*) and have to make a dash for it. The scene might end as follows:

SOUND: SHOT OFF MIKE AND RICOCHET CLOSE ON.
SOLDIER: SHOUTS TO COMRADES TO FIRE.
HARRY: Run for it, Jack. They've spotted us!
JACK: I'm coming!
SOUND: RUNNING FEET, CLOSE ON, SCATTERED SHOTS AND SHOUTS OFF.
HARRY: Here's the box.
JACK: I'll hold it. Ram down that handle!
HARRY: Right! Boy, I hope this works!
SOUND: WHIRR AND SHARP CLACK AS HANDLE OF CHARGER BOX IS LIFTED AND THRUST SHARPLY DOWN — SHOTS AND SHOUTS INCREASE.
JACK: Be there, Baby! Be there!
SOUND: A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS BUILDING IN CRESCENDO OF SOUND, SHARP CRACKING OF TIMBERS AND THUD OF FALLING EARTH AND DEBRIS AND A LONG RUMBLE AS THE WHOLE PATTERN DIES INTO SILENCE.

This same ending might be equally forceful if, at the peak of the explosion, music, made up largely of brass and tympani and indicative of the tremendous climax, were cued in. The scene then could be resolved by both sound and music, with the music providing the final climax.

In certain kinds of drama, suspense endings are effective. These can be achieved by providing a very striking last line for the scene and following it with a *sforzando* or "stinger" music cue. The music need not be loud. Often a quiet cue is more effective. It is the suddenness of the musical attack following immediately on the heels of the striking line that provides the suspense in the transition. Here is an example:

FETRIDGE: Laura, there's only one man in England who can help us. I'm going to find him.

LAURA: Mark, you must be careful.
FETRIDGE: I will, but I'm going to find him.
CAVANAUGH: I doubt it.
FETRIDGE (ANGRILY): And what's to stop me, Cavanaugh?
CAVANAUGH: Me. (PAUSE) I just killed him!
MUSIC: STINGER CUE IN BRASS, HOLD A MOMENT AND TAKE AWAY IN SNARLING CHORDS IN OBOE SECTION.

Scenes that come to a natural close leave a satisfying psychological effect on an audience. If two people are quarreling and one of them finally gets up, stomps to the door, flings out, and slams the door after him, it furnishes an excellent natural spot at which to end a scene.

Last lines of last scenes are particularly important. Here, the writer is not only leaving an impression to end a scene, but he is leaving a final impression of the whole program. If the plot is so constructed that the climax has already passed before the scene ends, particular care must be taken to prevent the interest from running downhill. Brilliance of dialogue may have to substitute for plot interest. Disposition of all the characters must be made, and the lines must be skillful to hold the interest of the audience to the very end.

TRANSITIONS

Transitions from scene to scene have been mentioned several times, but no complete discussion of them has been given. It is time now to take up this problem from the point of view of practical construction. What is the radio equivalent of the curtain in the theater which comes down to indicate a lapse of time or a change of scene?

There are five ways so far devised of making a scene transition in radio. Each method has its special merits and all are used constantly.

1. Silence can be used to indicate a change of scene.
2. Sound can be used to indicate a change of scene.
3. Music can indicate a change of scene.
4. An announcer or a narrator can interrupt the scene to make a transition.
5. Combinations of the above methods may be used.

Since each of these devices can be used in a number of ways, a rich repertoire is at the writer's command.

Availability of sound and music may govern the choice of transitional device. Every dramatic show will have actors and an announcer. Thus, methods one and four are always available. In some cases sound effects may be available, but they may be so meager and undependable as to be useless as a transitional device. Some dramatic programs (although not many) are produced without music; obviously, in those programs music cannot be used for transitions.

A musician need not be present; recordings may often be used with a considerable degree of success. The services of a turntable operator and a reasonably adequate library of recorded music are, of course, necessary. Since nearly all stations have both, some kind of music will ordinarily be available. The writer will usually be familiar with the facilities or lack of them when he plans the final form of his play and will govern himself accordingly in planning his transitions.

The second factor that governs the choice of transitional devices is the specific dramatic need of the moment. Not all these devices are equally effective under all circumstances. The author, naturally, will select the device that seems to him likely to prove most dramatically effective.

Here it may be well to warn the writer that he is composing in sound. Therefore, it is not enough for him merely to indicate in his script, "transition music," or simply to leave a blank line in the script to indicate a transition. If the author is really writing for radio, he will hear in his mind's ear exactly the sound pattern by which he wishes to make the transition from one scene to another and then translate that pattern into instructions in his script.

Silent transitions can be used for many purposes, but they are most effective to indicate a time lapse within a scene. Sound effects are particularly useful to indicate a change of locale or to establish time in a change of scene. The conventionalized device of using an automobile to indicate that a character is driving to the locale of the next scene is a case in point. Sounds of planes, trains, and boats can be used in the same way. If a transition is complicated in mood or action, music is the most useful device because of its extreme flexibility and its power of suggestion. If we had to fight a battle with sound effects during a transition, considerable time would be needed to establish the various effects. Fifteen seconds of music dominated by dissonant brasses and kettledrums would do a better job in less time. A scene or mood can be quickly established with music. When a long time elapses or important dramatic action takes place between scenes, the most economical device is narration. The announcer can succinctly put into words what it might not be possible to cover in any other way.

It is difficult to create a silent transition by simply stopping and starting scenes. Fades are more effective in giving the audience the desired impression. The writer must, therefore, provide at least one rather long line (ten or twelve words) which is not vital to an understanding of the scene. On these the scene can be faded out. Another line must be provided at the beginning of the following scene for the same purpose. These fade lines must be in character and must be a real part of the scene, but they must not be important, because the audience will hear only a part of them. The following is an example of a good place in which to use a silent transition. One character is getting ready to tell another a complicated incident which has just occurred. Suppose, as the plot is set up, the audience must know that character number one tells this story to character number two, but for purposes of suspense, it must not know what that story actually is. Here is how such a situation might be handled:

JOHN: But I don't see the point of all this. What are you driving at?

HENRY: Listen, you dope, and I'll tell you. Remember, yesterday, I said I thought somebody was following us?

JOHN: Sure, but . . .

HENRY: Well, listen. Just as I came in a few minutes ago, something happened. Maybe it doesn't mean a thing — but maybe it does. Anyway, I want you to know, so that if anything happens to me, you'll know what to do. (BEGIN FADE.) Now listen carefully and remember every word of what I'm going to tell you.

(PAUSE FOR TWO SECONDS' SILENCE.)

HENRY (SLOW FADE IN): Right now I don't know what it means any more than you do (UP FULL BY NOW), but, anyway, that's what happened.

JOHN: Look, Hank, are you sure?

HENRY: Just as sure as I'm sitting here.

By now the reader should be curious as to what that happening was. These lines illustrate how a silent transition can be effectively handled. Try reading the lines as indicated. Then try reading them without any fade, but only a two- or three-seconds' pause where it is indicated. Do you see what a different impression is created? No matter for what purpose a silent transition is used, this is technically the way it should appear in the script. Fade lines, which are not important to hear, should be provided before and after the silence with indications of when the fades should start and when the finish should be made.

Sound is seldom used alone as a transitional device, except perhaps as one of the conventionalized effects already mentioned. There are instances, however, in which sound is not only sufficient but also effective as a transitional device. Suppose the problem is to put a pilot into a plane and send him off on a combat mission. His take-off ends the scene. The beginning of the next scene shows that he is missing and has failed to report in. The transition might be handled in this way:

SOUND: PLANE WARMING UP — MOTOR GUNNED AND CUT, GUNNED AND CUT, FINALLY DROPPED TO IDLE AND HOLD UNDER DIALOGUE.

PILOT: O.K. I'm all set.

OFFICER: All right. Now remember, Jack. Don't get in any fights. We can't afford it. Information's what we want this trip. And we want it badly. Do what you can.

PILOT: Sure. I'll be back long before sundown. Don't worry.

OFFICER: O.K., boy. Roll 'em.

SOUND: COCKPIT COVER ROLLS FORWARD — MOTOR GUNS TWICE AND THEN PLANE ROARS INTO TAKE-OFF — FADES SOMEWHAT.

JOE: Don't worry, Skipper. Jack'll come back.
OFFICER (VERY QUIETLY): It's one chance in a hundred.
JOE: Jack'll make it if anybody can.
OFFICER: I had to do it, though. There was no other way.
SOUND: THE PLANE IS FADING INTO THE DISTANCE — HOLD FOR SIX SECONDS ON A LONG FADE — JUST BEFORE SOUND IS OUT COMPLETELY, START FADING IN RAPID HIGH-FREQUENCY CODE SIGNAL AND GRADUALLY CROSS-FADE UNTIL PLANE IS OUT AND CODE SIGNAL IS ESTABLISHED FULL . . . THEN CUT ALL SOUND.
RADIO MAN: It's no use, Skipper. I've been calling him for four hours now, and there's not a peep out of him.
OFFICER: Well, keep trying!
RADIO MAN: Sure, Skipper. We'll keep calling.

If the pilot is lost, the transitional device of having the plane gradually fade out in sound might also be highly effective as a symbol. Certainly, it would make an effective scene transition. Incidentally, this example will show the beginner how to put into words the effect desired as a transitional sound pattern.

Music is the most flexible of all transitional devices. There are several ways, technically, in which it may be used for this purpose, depending on the effect required. They might be listed as follows:

1. Dialogue can fade out; music fade in, up to level, then fade out, and dialogue fade in for the succeeding scene.
2. Dialogue can end quietly, with no fade; music can be brought in abruptly at a quiet level, built to a climax, faded to a quiet level, stopped abruptly, and dialogue begun on the same level.
3. Dialogue can end on a high dramatic key, abruptly; music can be piled in on this break just as abruptly, swept to a climax, and cut cold for the abrupt beginning of a new scene.
4. Dialogue can progress at a normal level; music can be faded in and swelled until it drowns the dialogue, held for the transition; dialogue of the following scene started, and then the music diminished until the dialogue can

again be heard, and then music dropped out or faded out completely.

5. Any combination of these methods may be used, with one technique ending the scene, and any one of the others introducing the new scene.

Which of these methods the writer selects will depend, of course, on the scenes themselves and the kind of effect which he wishes to achieve. It would take too long to illustrate all the possible combinations. One or two complicated patterns will have to suffice. However, no matter what combination of techniques is used, the principle involved in writing them is the same, and only the sound pattern differs.

Suppose the scene is at a dam on a large river which is on a rampage. There is momentary danger that the dam will give away, flooding miles of lowland and endangering the lives of hundreds of people. Just as the scene ends, the dam does give way. The problem is to give the audience an idea of the immensity of the catastrophe which follows and the tragedy which it carries in its wake. The transition might be handled in this way:

SOUND: THE ROAR OF WATER POURING OVER THE DAM IS HELD IN THE BACKGROUND — THERE ARE EXCITED SHOUTS OF MEN IN THE DISTANCE.

FOREMAN (ON PHONE): Hello! Hello! . . . What? . . . No. I don't think so. We can't hold it. The dam's going to go . . . What? . . . No. I don't dare. If the pressure doesn't drop in the next twenty minutes, I've got to get my men off. It may go any minute . . . Sure, I'm doing everything I can. Tell them down there to get people out as fast as they can. Good-bye!

SOUND: PHONE HANGS UP — DOOR OPENS, SOUND OF WATER INCREASES

WORKMAN: Boss, get the men in right away. She's gonna blow!

FOREMAN: Where?

WORKMAN: She just split next to the lock. Hurry.

FOREMAN: I'll turn on the alarm bell.

SOUND: ALARM BELL STARTS CLANGING OVER THE FURORE.

FOREMAN: I hope they know which way to go.

WORKMAN: Look out, Boss. She's going!

SOUND: A GREAT RUMBLE BUILDS AND BUILDS TO A SHARP, CRASHING EXPLOSION OF SOUND, BLENDING WITH THE TERRIFIED SHOUTS OF MEN — HOLD HIGH AND BUILD.

MUSIC: LOUD SUDDEN ATTACK ON KETTLEDRUMS, FOLLOWED BY A SCREAMING BUILD OF BRASS AS THE ENTIRE ORCHESTRA SWELLS TO COVER THE SOUND PATTERN — BUILD TO THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE CLIMAX AND THEN SLOWLY DROP THE MUSIC IN PITCH, VOLUME, AND TEMPO OVER A TWENTY-SECOND PERIOD, AND SEGUE INTO A VERY LOW MOURNFUL PASSAGE ON WOODWINDS WITH STRINGS UNDER AN OCCASIONAL LOW, MUFFLED RUMBLE OF KETTLEDRUMS WHICH GRADUALLY FADES AWAY — FINALLY, FADE THE WHOLE PATTERN SLOWLY UNTIL IT IS OUT.

WOMAN (IN CLOSE, CRYING SOFTLY — FADE THIS IN).

SOUND: LOW LAPPING OF WATER IN THE FOREGROUND — START FADING IN SOUND OF TWO-CYLINDER MOTOR BOAT AND INCREASE UNTIL IT COMES ON SCENE.

MAN (CALLING FROM A DISTANCE): Hello! Hellooooooooo. Anyone there?

WOMAN: THE CRYING STOPS FOR A MOMENT, THEN BREAKS IN A HEARTBROKEN SOB.

This is a little on the stupendous side, perhaps, but it does give some idea of how such a situation might be handled. Notice how little dialogue is used and how much dependency is placed on sound. In this instance, sound ended the scene in a crashing climax, which was sustained until music covered it by a still higher volume pattern. When the music is established, the sound is faded out so that the audience never is quite sure when it stopped hearing sound and when it began hearing music. This blending process ends the first scene. Then the music carries the burden of ending the horror of the scene and letting the audience down to the quiet, human tragedy of the aftermath. Since the scene must start very quietly, music is completely faded out, and then the crying of the woman is faded in as a new note to begin the next mood.

Here is another example of a completely different use of music for a transition. Suppose the audience knows that an egotistical fellow ("Brooklyn") has told everyone that he is a wonderful boxer. The scene is an army camp; his fellow soldiers have arranged a bout in which he is being pitted (without his knowledge) against an experienced boxer (the sergeant). According to the plan, the boxer is to let Brooklyn go along for a couple of rounds, and then, at a predetermined time, finish him off. The sympathy of the audience has been strongly elicited for the group that is giving the braggart his come-uppance. Everyone wants to see him taught a lesson. Still the whole show is light comedy and should not be taken too seriously. The transition might be handled in this way:

SOUND: CHEERING OF MEN IN BACKGROUND — IN THE FOREGROUND IS THE SHUFFLE OF FEET ON CANVAS AND THE OCCASIONAL BRUSH AS BLOWS OF THE BOXERS GLANCE OFF EACH OTHER.

BROOKLYN (HEAVILY BREATHING): Come on. Don't keep backin' away . . . Come on in and I'll moider you . . .

SERGEANT (LOW): You're gettin' nervous, Brooklyn.

BROOKLYN: Is zat so? . . . Well, how about this . . . oop!

SERGEANT (LOW): You missed, Brooklyn!

BROOKLYN: Come on. (EFFORT) Quit duckin'.

VOICE (CALLING FROM THE RINGSIDE): O.K., Sergeant. Now!

SOUND: CROWD SUDDENLY QUIETS — SHUFFLING OF FEET PAUSES.

SERGEANT (ON MIKE): Now?

VOICE: Sure.

SERGEANT: Well, Brooklyn . . .

BROOKLYN: Hey, what gives?

SERGEANT: This!

SOUND: TWO QUICK, SOLID SMACKS OF THE GLOVES THAT JAR EVEN THE AUDIENCE.

MUSIC: TWO QUICK, DIFFERENT-TONED THUMPS ON THE KETTLEDRUMS, SAME TEMPO AS THE BLOWS, FOLLOWED BY A DRUNKEN, BROKEN-TIMED RUN UPWARD IN THE TRUMPET SECTION TO A HIGH DISCORD: THEN A GENTLE, SWAYING DESCENT IN SAXOPHONES, BREAKING INTO BIRD CALLS AND ENDING IN LOW, REELING RHYTHM IN THE STRING SECTION WHICH FADES OUT.

BROOKLYN (GROANS SOFTLY, THEN STARTS TO CONSCIOUSNESS): Hey! Somebody hit me!

CROWD: SHOUTS OF LAUGHTER FROM THE MEN.

SOLDIER: Sure, Brooklyn, but that was ten minutes ago!

This transition was designed purely for comedy of a rather obvious sort, but it would, if properly executed, probably be effective.

The uses of music in the creation of effective transitions are almost endless. Each problem is a new challenge, and there is, with music, an ever-new solution always waiting. If the writer knows enough about music to write suggestive, provoking directions for music and there is a composer-conductor or an organist with an equally creative imagination to carry out the instructions, there is no limit to what can be done. Because so many kinds of handling are possible, specific rules are out of order. Here is where the writer has a chance to indicate his natural "feel" for the theatrically right approach. This, in turn, will be soundly based on what the writer understands about the psychology of sound.

The use of a narrator to create a scene transition is frequent in the daytime serial and can be used to equal advantage in other instances. If it is necessary or desirable to introduce exposition between scenes or even to make comment on either the preceding or succeeding scene, this transitional device is a good one. It has a tendency to break dramatic continuity, but, if it is skillfully handled, it may not only preserve but heighten this continuity. Much depends on the manner in which it is handled.

The simplest way in which the narrator can be used is to introduce him directly between scenes, using a pause to precede his entrance and possibly a fade on his last line. Here is an example:

MARK (SIMPLY): I love you—very much.
JOAN (QUIET): I know.
MARK (PAUSE): Look. Chin up . . . there. You're coming out with me right now to meet Mother and Dad!
JOAN: No! I can't!
(DEAD SILENCE)
NARRATOR (QUIETLY): The words came out by themselves. Joan was scarcely aware she said them. But there they were—words she knew would sometime have to be spoken. She couldn't face Mark's father and mother. She couldn't. And as

she stood with her forehead pushed hard against Mark's broad shoulder, a voice came to her — a harsh, rasping voice — penetrating through ten years of silence . . . a voice she thought she'd silenced forever. But she hadn't. She knew that now. (FADE) She could hear that voice saying to her, cruelly . . .

MARSH: Let you marry Jack Martin? You're not fit to marry anyone. You know that, don't you? And you know why, too!

And by this simple device the narrator takes us out of the middle of a scene, turns time back ten years, and reconstructs a scene which the girl is reliving in her mind at that climactic moment. It might be difficult to tell all this to an audience any other way. Done in the way shown, it can be made to seem natural, right, and completely clear. Under these circumstances, the use of a narrator is right and effective.

When one considers the possibilities of combining some of these transitional techniques, the latitude available becomes apparent. For example, sound, silence, music, and narration might all be used in a single transition. Music and narration are often combined. Sound and music are frequently used both alternately and concurrently. The beginner would do well to listen to several dramatic broadcasts just to note the methods by which transitions are handled.

ENTRANCE AND EXIT LINES

The writer must be careful to see that in all cases, characters entering or leaving a scene in progress have lines to cover them. Remember, the audience assumes itself to be with the speaker who sounds nearest. If he wants to tell the audience that one of the group at the microphone is leaving, he can do so only by letting the audience hear that person leaving. In order to make such a sound picture clear, the character must have a line to read as he is leaving in order that the audience may hear him fade away. The same thing holds true for entrance lines. An actor must have something to fade in on, if the writer wishes him to come to the center of the scene. A line like "Hello, there," or "Hi, pal," is not a good entrance line. It is too short to allow the actor to fade in. If the line read, "Hello there. How's everything going today?" it might allow enough time for the actor to move the necessary eight or ten feet and give the listener a sense of fading in. A writer should not construct a scene in such a way that a character is made to say "Good-bye" on mike, followed by a speech from one of the other characters in the scene and have the character leaving speak his next line from off mike. If the audience cannot hear a character move from one place to another, it cannot tell that the character has moved. If listeners hear the character say good-bye on mike, they will assume he is still there until they hear him move. If they hear the next line from off-mike, it will confuse them. They may think it is another person. So keep all movement accompanied by lines wherever possible. This rule holds for moving characters around within a scene as well as for entrance and exit lines. Movement of the characters can be indicated by such directions as "Off mike, fading on," or "On mike, fading off," or "Slightly off mike." Each line should be planted with relation to the microphone. Unless instructed otherwise, the director and actors will assume that the speech is to be delivered on mike. Any variation from that position should be indicated.

COVERING ACTION WITH LINES

In a recent script turned in to the author, this sound cue appeared:

SOUND: MAN WALKING OVER FROZEN GROUND, CARRYING GIRL AND EMPTY SUITCASE WHICH THE WIND KEEPS BLOWING AGAINST HIS KNEES. SUITCASE BANGS INTO SIDE OF CAR AS MAN OPENS DOOR — MAN DEPOSITS GIRL HEAVILY ON SEAT OF CAR, THROWS SUITCASE IN BESIDE HER.

The writer of this script demonstrated childlike faith in the ability of the sound man. Apparently, the writer thought the sound department could put all that into sound. Perhaps it could be done, but even if it were, the audience would never know what was going on. The trouble in this cue is twofold. First, the author has asked for something to be put into sound which does not make noise. And secondly, too much action is left to sound effects alone. This whole routine, if handled realistically, would take perhaps twenty seconds. Meanwhile, the show has stopped. The audience would hear only a welter of indistinguishable sound from which it could formulate no picture at all. Sound effects cannot tell the audience, through footsteps, that they are the steps of a man carrying another man, let alone tell the audience that it is a girl and a suitcase. Even what can be told in sound is completely unsupported by lines, so that the audience has no clue as to what they are supposed to hear.

The moral is: support complicated sound effects that indicate action with explanatory lines. They must not be obvious, but they must be clear. The situation discussed above might have been effective had it had some supporting lines to show what was happening. It might have been done like this:

SOUND: WIND HOWLING OVER OPEN PRAIRIE.
MAN: Never mind. Go on and hop in the car before you freeze. I'll bring your suitcase.
GIRL (TEETH CHATTERING): I . . . I can't move. My leg's . . .
MAN: Never mind. I'll carry you.
GIRL: The suitcase . . . I . . .
MAN: I'll get that too. Easy now. Up you go. (THIS LAST WITH EFFORT.)
GIRL: GROANS SLIGHTLY.
SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ON FROZEN GROUND.
GIRL: Let me take the suitcase.
SOUND: SUITCASE BANGS AGAINST HIS LEG.
MAN: I've got it. Can you turn the handle on the car door?
GIRL: Sure.
SOUND: CAR DOOR OPENS.
MAN: There. Can you scoot in now?
GIRL: I can make it. Thanks.

An audience could have understood the action if it were thus supported by lines. They never would have understood what was going on from writer's original sound cue.

Some simple, obvious action that is easy to identify in sound may be indicated by sound alone. However, when more than one sound occurs at once, or as soon as the action becomes at all complicated, it must be supported by sound. After all, there are comparatively few occasions in which lines cannot be realistically assumed. They might as well be written in. Care must be taken to keep lines from being too obviously expository.

Allow Time for Action

While time is somewhat fluid in the drama, and certain liberties can be taken with an audience's sense of elapsed time, there are limits. It will not do to send Johnny to the corner grocery for a loaf of bread on line six and have him come romping back with it on line eleven. It may have taken the writer fifteen minutes to get those five intervening lines written, but it will play in a matter of eight seconds, which is a little short for a trip to the grocery and back.

For some reason, this is one of the commonest errors beginners make in radio drama. Perhaps because lines are produced so laboriously, the elapsed time seems long to the writer. Perhaps he fails to provide for the errand at the proper point in the plot so that the scene has to doodle until Johnny comes back with the bread. In such a case, it is better to let a transition serve for the lapse of time than to use meaningless dialogue to fill the time. By careful planning, Johnny could usually be sent out earlier in the script, and something which had to be accomplished could be under way while Johnny was out. Careful planning to avoid slowing up the show or time-lapse transitions are the answer to most such problems. Under some circumstances time must be allowed for action to happen, while the writer fills that time as interestingly as possible, even though the dramatic action of the play is momentarily suspended.

Action and dialogue are deceiving in the matter of time. If your characters are washing dishes, they cannot start the job at the top of the page and finish it at the bottom. A page of good dialogue will play in slightly less than a minute, and this is less time than it takes most people to wash dishes. Even simpler action is sometimes deceiving. Suppose you have a man and a woman getting into a car. It must not be done by calling for footsteps across a sidewalk followed by a car door opening and closing and the cough of the starting motor. The man will probably help the woman in, close her door, walk around the car, get into the driver's seat, close that door, and *then*, and then only, is he ready to start the motor. All this takes time. It also takes lines to cover the action. The writer must also decide whether the microphone is going to stay with the man or the woman. The beginner might indicate such a piece of business this way:

JOHN: Come on. Let's drive over to the club. My car's right here.
MARY: All right.
SOUND: TWO FOOTSTEPS ACROSS WALK — CAR DOOR OPEN, CLOSE — MOTOR START AND DRIVE AWAY — MOTOR IN BACKGROUND.
JOHN: It's a nice day, isn't it?

The faults with this manner of handling action have already been pointed out. What this scene needs is cover lines to keep the dialogue going during the necessary action, which can, at the same time, help to explain the action and help the sound man to make a realistic scene. It might be done this way:

JOHN: Come on, Mary. Let's drive over to the club.
MARY: All right. Where's your car?
JOHN: Right here.
SOUND: TWO PAIRS OF FOOTSTEPS ON CONCRETE UNDER FOLLOWING.
JOHN: I thought we might be needing it, so I left it here in front of the building.
SOUND: STEPS STOP — CAR DOOR OPENS.
JOHN: Hop in, Mary.
MARY: Thanks.
SOUND: TWO QUICK STEPS.
JOHN: Flip the lock on the driver's side. Will you, Mary?
MARY: Surely.
SOUND: CAR DOOR CLOSES — STEPS ON PAVEMENT AROUND CAR – DOOR OPENS.

JOHN (SLIGHT EFFORT AS HE GETS IN): There we are.
SOUND: DOOR CLOSES — RATTLE OF KEYS — STARTER.
JOHN: It's a nice day, isn't it?
MARY: Yes. Let's not rush too much. It's nice to be out.
SOUND: GEARS SHIFT AND CAR PULLS AWAY.

These are small details, but of such is excellent dramatic writing built.

VISUALIZE THE SCENE

For every line of dialogue or sound which the writer puts on paper he should visualize the effect it will have on the scene; whether it will cause any character to move about, to change expression, or to make some gesture. He must also know where his microphone is, and where all the characters are in relation to it. All this, moreover, must be indicated in the script. Every time there is a change in any element of the scene, that change should be noted in the script. If a character changes his position, coming nearer to or going farther away from the mike, this change should be indicated. Or, if the microphone should move from one location to another within the scene, this, too, should be noted.

Moving the mike within a scene creates some interesting problems. How can the writer tell the audience, for instance, that the characters are leaving their position by the sink in the kitchen and are going into the butler's pantry? There are several ways of indicating such a move. Presumably, when the mike moves, it moves with somebody. Therefore, if the audience hears a character talking without fading, and if it hears someone else fade while talking, it assumes that it is staying with the first person. Then, if the second person, by line or action, can be anchored to the spot where the scene was first located, at the sink, the audience knows it is moving with the first character to the butler's pantry or any other location that is indicated by lines. This sounds complex and sometimes it is. However, care taken with little matters like this may make the difference between a good script and a bad one. Perhaps it can be accomplished easily with a line. The number one character might say, "Excuse me a minute, I've got to get some spoons from the pantry." Then the audience hears footsteps and the fading voice of the number two character saying, "That's all right. I'll stay here and peel these potatoes." That is a simple, obvious solution. But no matter how simple or how complex the solution may be, these two points must always be kept straight: where in the scene is the microphone; and where are all the characters in relation to that position?

Length of Scenes

There is no arbitrary length for a scene in a radio play. There are, however, some considerations which tend to place limits on length. It takes a certain amount of time to set a scene, orient the audience, and acquaint it with who is present and what is going on. This can seldom be done in less than half a page of dialogue. Time must still be taken to give in dialogue what the scene was intended to tell. Anything worth devoting a scene to will probably take at least half a page. Therefore, for all practical purposes a scene will not be shorter than one page of script. Plot structure is the only limit to length. Usually a plot will require several scenes. The structure will determine how much time is to be spent on each and in this way limit the length.

Beginners may waste too much time getting a scene under way and thus lengthen scenes unnecessarily. Other beginners, because they neglect to orient the audience in each new scene, may wonder why listeners cannot follow their stories. If the writer strings together too many short scenes in sequence, the audience may have a jerky, disjointed feeling. The story will not progress smoothly or flow as it should. A scene should be just long enough to keep the audience informed as to where it takes place and to do the dramatic job assigned it in the plot structure, and no longer. It is better to multiply scenes to clarify more angles of the plot than to stretch fewer scenes beyond their necessary length. A good rule for scene length is to write the scene and then stop!

Montages

There is one dramatic device which has become so common as to be standard radio technique. That device is the montage scene. A montage scene has been defined elsewhere in this book as one in which several scenes are blended together by some kind of blurring device. The montage is a device for covering a lot of ground quickly and impressionistically, rather than realistically. It is chiefly used as an expository or a climactic device and is equally effective for either purpose.

The separate segments of a montage need not be complete scenes in themselves. They are only highlights from many scenes, selected with highlights of other scenes to create an effect or to tell a story. These segments of scenes are usually blurred one into the other by either sound or music in an impressionistic manner.

Since montage scenes are often used to create climaxes, they frequently start with comparatively long segments of scenes which grow shorter and faster as the montage progresses, until they reach the desired climax. A montage scene should seldom exceed two pages of dialogue. The device loses effectiveness if stretched too far.

Suppose a writer is faced with telling his audience that a nation-wide man-hunt is on. He wants to give the impression that all the law-enforcement agencies of the country are on the lookout for a master criminal. He wants to show that an incident is spreading to national proportions. He might attempt to create this impression through a montage scene. The scene preceding the montage ends with the first two lines given here; then the montage begins.

GOVERNOR: I don't care what you have to do. Find him! That man is dangerous!

SOUND: CUTS IN SUDDENLY WITH A HIGH-PITCHED CODE KEY SENDING RAPIDLY FOR ABOUT FIVE SECONDS AND CUT.

COMMISSIONER: Send out a description and a general alarm for all metropolitan police. Get a picture and put it on the printer right away. Contact all suburban police and ask them to cooperate. If he's in New York, we'll soon know about it!

SOUND: CODE KEY IN AGAIN RAPIDLY, THIS TIME FOR ONLY FOUR SECONDS AND CUT.

RADIO LOUD-SPEAKER (THE KIND OF TONE THAT MIGHT BE IN A SQUAD CAR): All Chicago police! Be on the lookout for Jack Martinelli, wanted for kidnapping. Six feet, three inches tall, dark, curly hair, stoop-shouldered, scar across left index (START FADE) finger at the knuckle, speech is good English.

SOUND: CODE KEY IN HIGH AND FAST FOR THREE SECONDS AND CUT.

SERGEANT: Can you beat that! The chief's got the whole force out combing the San Francisco waterfront for this guy Martinelli. I ain't been to bed for two nights!

SOUND: CODE KEY IN FAST, HOLD FOR TWO SECONDS AND CUT.

MAN: Well, they've finally called in the FBI. You know your orders. Go get him, boys. Get Martinelli!

SOUND: CODE KEY IN FOR ONLY A COUPLE OF SECONDS.

MUSIC: COVER THE CODE IMMEDIATELY WITH CLIMACTIC MUSIC.

Notice that there is no attempt made to create a realistic scene. In each case the locale is mentioned in the lines, and the kind of voice indicates something of the character in each case – just enough to keep them from sounding alike. Each of the brief scenes is one line shorter than the preceding one. Each time the code comes in, it is a little faster, a little louder, and a little shorter. All these details help to create a feeling of mounting tension. Then, too, the fact that the hunt spreads clear across the country and finally goes into the hands of the FBI helps to intensify the climactic effect.

Here is another example in which the montage device quickly gives the necessary exposition and at the same time creates a mounting tension. Music instead of sound is used as a connecting device, but the general effect is the same. Suppose the audience knows before the montage scene starts that the state has a good case against the hero for murder. The audience knows that he is innocent, but the author wishes to make it feel that things are getting blacker for the hero all the time. Witness after witness brings in evidence that looks hard to refute. It would take a lot of time to dramatize all the court procedures which would be necessary if the scenes were treated realistically; they do, however, submit to montage treatment which might be somewhat like this:

MUSIC: OMINOUS, FAST-MOVING CHORDS, MOVING UP IN PITCH AND BUILD FOR ABOUT EIGHT SECONDS, THEN HIT A CHORD AND HOLD UNDER ON TREMULO FOR . . .

PROSECUTOR: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. The time of death has been established at about eleven-thirty. Now can you identify the man who came out of the Montrose hotel at eleven-thirty-four on the night of April 1 and got into your cab?

CABBIE: Yes, sir. It was that man over there.

PROSECUTOR: What happened then?

CABBIE: He asked me to drive north toward the city bridge.

PROSECUTOR: Then what?

CABBIE: As we crossed, he rolled down the window and tossed something out.

MUSIC: IN ON STINGER CHORD, MOVES UP IN PITCH THROUGH RESTLESS, OMINOUS PHRASE FOR SIX SECONDS, HITS CHORD, HOLDS UNDER FOR . . .

PROSECUTOR: Tell us, Patrolman Johnson, what your crew found.

JOHNSON: We dragged the river at the spot under the city bridge, and we found this here gun.

PROSECUTOR: Could you judge how long it had been in the water?

JOHNSON: Not very long. There ain't no corrosion or nothin'.

PROSECUTOR: And you'll testify to the location.

JOHNSON: That's right!

MUSIC: SAME PROCESS AS BEFORE, BUT HIGHER AND SHORTER — HOLD LAST CHORD AND FADE BEHIND.

PROSECUTOR: And you are the city ballistics expert?

EXPERT: That's right.

PROSECUTOR: Is this the gun that killed Mary Malone?

EXPERT: That's the gun, all right.

MUSIC: SAME ROUTINE AS BEFORE, BUT HIGHER IN PITCH AND HOLD.

PROSECUTOR: Can you tell us to whom you sold this gun, and when?

MAN: I sold it on the morning of April 1 to that man there!

MUSIC: UP QUICKLY INTO HIGH DRAMATIC CLIMAX AND RESOLVE.

In this scene the same principles of montage are demonstrated. Just the essence of each succeeding scene is put into actual dialogue; what might realistically be six hours in court is packed into less than two minutes. Notice that music stays in during the entire sequence. It swells between scenes and then fades under, but stays in, during the dialogue. This continuous use of music knits the flashes of scenes together and gives them a homogeneity and continuity that would not otherwise be possible.

The montage scene is something of a dramaturgical gadget. It can be overused, and it can be badly used. But assigned to its proper rôle and used skillfully, it can be of considerable help to the radio writer who is always faced with the problem of compression.

Program Closings

Finally, the writer is faced with the problem of winding up his program and getting off the air. Again, there are certain obligations which he must fulfill and for which time must be provided. A part of the enjoyment of the theater is that time of release after the curtain comes down when the audience gives vent to its emotions. If a theater audience likes a play, it wants a chance to say so in applause. This in turn is acknowledged by the cast in curtain calls. Thus, both sides of the footlights have a chance to release pent-up emotions. It can be argued that psychologically the same time for release is needed in radio; the few seconds of applause may be said to fulfill this purpose. Certain acknowledgments have to be made. Bows to the writer, the director, the cast, the musical conductor, are usually made at the close. If they have given a good performance, they deserve recognition, and the audience usually likes to know who did what.

If the program is sponsored, there must be a closing commercial. This is nearly always placed as soon after the curtain of the program as possible, before there is a chance of losing those of the audience who may leave early to tune in another program.

Finally, if the program is a continuous one, there will probably be a teaser for the next program in the closing continuity. All these matters must be provided for in the time after the musical curtain comes down on the last scene of the play. In many cases this material is provided by the continuity department of the network or by the advertising agency which builds the program; it does not then fall on the shoulders of the writer. He may be told merely that he must allow two minutes at the end for a routine close. In some cases the allowance is cut to one minute; in others it may stretch to four minutes or more. The time allowance is usually standardized for any given program.

The normal order would probably provide time immediately following the close of the scene for applause or audience release, place the commercial next, the acknowledgments third, and the teaser for the next program last.

On many programs, the credits follow the curtain on the show and precede the closing commercial. In almost every case, the teaser for the next show is the last thing on the bill.

This chapter has attempted to give specific help about some of the problems which often puzzle the beginning writer. The examples used to illustrate the points were for the most part invented. One thing should be remembered. We are talking about a pattern of sound. That can never be completely translated into print. The real laboratory for the radio writer is his radio. Hours of listening to dramas on the air is the best possible preparation for writing radio plays. And when you listen, listen for specific techniques. Do not get involved in the story. If you feel a temptation to forget why you are listening, take notes. Make yourself listen for openings and closings, scene climaxes, transition techniques and effective scene tags. Study the mechanics of the work. And do not suppose just because you hear something done in a certain way on the air, that that necessarily is the best way to do it. Many dramatic mistakes are perpetuated every day. You must listen with a discriminating ear and slowly develop the ability to separate the good from the bad. Listen, listen, listen – then write!

CHAPTER 17

PROBLEMS IN SPECIFIC DRAMA TYPES

There are at least four basic forms of radio drama in common use, as outlined in Chapter 5. To refresh the reader's memory, they are:

1. The serial drama
2. The episodic drama
3. The unit drama
4. The dramatic narrative

Each of the basic types of radio drama is subject to further subdivision, and each type has many applications to programs. However, there is enough similarity within each of the four major types to make them clearly distinguishable, and each basic type presents certain problems to the writer.

The Serial Program

We have already defined the serial program as a continued story. The same set of characters appears in succeeding broadcasts, and the same general plot-line is followed from one broadcast to another. The serial drama is used in several ways in radio, but by far its most frequent and best-known use is in the so-called daytime serial. The daytime serial is one of the commonest of program formats. The usual daytime serial is fifteen minutes long and is broadcast five times a week, Monday through Friday. The idea was probably adapted from the movie serial, initiated by Hollywood in the early development of the motion-picture industry, and which in turn was adopted from earlier sources extending far back in dramatic history.

The audience

Nearly all daytime serials are designed for and slanted to the large middle class of women listeners. They use the radio as a running background for their housework. The type of audience for whom daytime serials are planned and the conditions under which it listens determine the rules that govern this form of drama. These rules are the result of a long and costly process of trial and error. Like all rules that govern any kind of writing, they may be broken with impunity when a compensating "good" can be achieved.

The first important factors to consider are the interests of the women who make up this audience. In general, their interests lie in two opposite directions. These women are interested first of all in people like themselves who have the same interests, experiences, and problems as their own. They are also interested in more or less exotic characters and in stories which give them escape from the humdrum of their everyday lives. Always they will look at a story from the feminine point of view. An adventure story that might interest a male audience would be likely to leave them cold, but a love story that a male audience might find silly or sentimental will find ready acceptance by the daytime woman listener.

The time of their listening must also be considered. Women are busy getting their families off to work and school until about nine o'clock in the morning. From then until three-thirty or four in the afternoon, when the children come home from school, their time is more or less their own to manage. It is during this period that the daytime serial is usually broadcast.

Even though the family is not at home, the woman of the house still has a busy day. She must wash dishes, clean her house, do the family shopping, and perform many other household duties. Some of these duties take her away from home; most of them, however, are carried on at home within earshot of a radio. It is while she is going through these many duties that she listens to the daytime serials. Not often does she sit down and give herself up to listening. Her attention is, therefore, divided. She may even try to listen while she is doing something noisy like using the vacuum cleaner or beating eggs. Because different days bring different tasks, it is not always possible for a woman to do the same work at the same time every day. So, even when she wants to listen to her chosen serial, she is often prevented. Shopping, or callers, or other interruptions may interfere. Therefore her listening is not only divided, it is intermittent.

All these conditions must be considered in writing a radio serial. Let us examine now the ways in which these conditions affect each element of the dramatic structure.

The theme

The theme of the daytime serial usually is obvious. It is often stated very bluntly in the opening of the program every day. The theme is sometimes even implied in the title of the program. *Life Can Be Beautiful* is a case in point. Women audiences usually dislike controversial themes. They prefer them so right and so righteous as to be beyond question. Themes are sometimes influenced by the late Horatio Alger because the audience for which they are designed likes his forthright kind of goodness. In some other dramatic forms the writer may allow his listeners to form their own conclusions from the implications in the program. Writers of the serial program not only help the listeners to draw their own conclusions, but state them frankly. A good theme for a daytime serial is one which will find universal acceptance and which has, inherent in it, a high degree of human interest.

The plot

Plotting a daytime serial is a unique procedure. In other kinds of dramatic writing, there are some terminal facilities, but not in the daytime serial. Some have been on the air continuously for years and years, and the story-line must continue unbroken. No writer, obviously, can stretch a single story over so long a time as that. In reality, most daytime serials are a *series* of long stories, all of which concern some of the same central characters; the plots overlap each other by periods of time varying from one to four weeks. Most such story-lines will continue for at least three months and sometimes longer before a basic plot-thread is terminated. Because successful programs go on and on, the plot-idea must be capable of infinite expansion and complications. A serial program tends to increase in value to its sponsor as it grows in age. The longer a program has been on the air, the more people will know about it and like it, and consequently the larger audience it is likely to have. The writer, therefore, must devise a plot-idea which is capable of great expansion.

Experience, scientific testing, and careful analysis of fan mail and audience ratings have determined these facts about the plotting of serial programs:

1. The end of each program should provide a slight climax or a slight increase in the tension of the conflict in order to carry the audience over to the next broadcast and encourage it to listen.
2. A fairly strong climax needs to be placed near the end of the Friday script in order to carry the audience over a two-day silence to the Monday program.
3. Three months is usually about as long as an audience can be interested in one major plot-line. Some plot-lines develop and end in less time, and others take longer; but this three-month period has been found a satisfactory average.
4. Only a very small advancement in the dramatic action is made each day.
5. The plot will tend to revolve around fairly obvious conflicts.
6. A new story-line must be introduced and sufficiently well established to have captured the audience's interest before an old story-line reaches its climax.
7. The main plot-ideas must be reiterated frequently, not only on a single program, but in succeeding programs, in order to help the audience to follow it.
8. It is possible to use not only a main plot or story-line, but one or more sub-plots simultaneously.

The writer of the daytime serial dare not ever assume that an audience is following his story. He must *make* them follow his story. The story must be so interesting that the audience will tune in again and again to follow its development. For this reason a slight climax is called for at the end of each day's program. This increasing of the intensity of the conflict is designed to offset the time lapse until the next program, the natural forgetfulness of the listener, and the inertia which might keep the listener from tuning in the next day. The Friday program is always a particular problem because of the two-day lapse instead of the normal twenty-four-hour lapse in programs. It is much easier for the listener to forget about the story over the week-end; the writer tries to offset this danger by beginning a particularly gripping episode on Friday.

The three-month time limit on the over-all development of one particular story-line has been arrived at by a process of experimentation. It is always, of course, subject to some variation which will be governed by the material with which the writer has to work. However, it has been observed that audiences grow restive, and listeners seem to slip away if one single plot-idea is pursued too far or stretched out too long.

There are two good reasons why plots must move slowly. In the first place, every writer wants to husband his plot material carefully. He knows that he will have to stretch his story over a good many years, and he does not want to waste plot material by giving away too much of it in any one program. Story ideas are hard to come by. There is also a limit to the number of situations into which a given set of characters can be thrown, and the writer, for reasons of economy alone, must make his story-line stretch. The second reason has to do with the audience. Even loyal listeners often find it impossible to listen every day. A listener who has missed two days' broadcasts and tunes in again on the third day must not be allowed to feel lost, lest he lose interest and never tune in again. Of course, it is possible to carry economy of plotting too far. It is said of one program on the air that if a lamp falls off a table on Friday, it does not hit the floor until at least the following Friday. This is husbanding plot a little too well. One of the hardest problems in plotting the daytime serial is to know how quickly one can move and how slowly one dare move in the development of the story-line.

In a radio serial, an obvious conflict between protagonist and antagonist is better than a subtle, complex conflict. The average, middle-class women's audience which listens to the daytime serial wants to be able to identify itself completely with the protagonist and to be able wholeheartedly to dislike the antagonist. Subtleties and nicety of character drawing are wasted here.

One of the major plot problems in the daytime serial is that of holding the audience toward the end of the major story-line, when there often tends to be a slackening of interest. In order to offset a loss of audience, writers try to get the succeeding major plot-line, not only planted, but well under way, before the current plot-line is finished. This lapping of the beginning of one story over the end of another is the only device that has yet been developed for offsetting a slump in interest. Sometimes the plotting can be so arranged that a minor sub-plot, which has been running along with the major plot-line, can be heightened and expanded into a major line at the conclusion of the current major story. This is one of the best antidotes, because the audience that follows the program consistently has plenty of time to get interested in the characters of the sub-plot before they become characters in the main plot.

One of the greatest mistakes a writer can make is to assume that he has a constant audience. Because he works with the program every day, he may assume that the audience is listening every day. This is far from true. The only way audience ratings can be raised and audiences made larger is by the addition of new listeners. The writer, therefore, in the handling of his plot must constantly try to interest new listeners. Casual tuners-in find it difficult to interest themselves in a program unless they can immediately sense the major conflict and the lineup of protagonist and antagonist. Therefore, the writer must reiterate his major plot point every day. Moreover, the repetition must be handled in such a way as to make it as inoffensive as possible to habitual listeners. The plots of some daytime serials are handled so lucidly and move in such a way that a listener can follow the story even if she hears only one program a week.

The daytime serial is the only kind of radio dramatic fare in which it is possible to use sub-plots. In this respect the plotting of daytime serials parallels the plot structure of a novel. There is room, within the framework of the daytime serial, for not only a major plot-line, but also for one or two sub-plot lines.

The problem of plotting the daytime serial may be summed up this way: This formula offers the writer more plot possibilities than any other kind of radio drama and at the same time presents more problems and necessitates the conformity to more strict rules than almost any other dramatic type.

Characters

The daytime serial offers special advantages to the writer in the creation of characters. There is much more latitude allowed in almost every respect simply because time is available. In all other forms of the radio drama the writer must be deft, quick, and sure in his delineation of character. Little time can be allowed for the creation of the characters before they go to work in the story. The leisurely pace of the daytime serial, however, offers many more possibilities for their creation and development.

Serials are usually built around one central character, although occasionally a pair of characters may form the nucleus of the program. Even the titles indicate this practice: *Ma Perkins, Our Gal Sunday, Backstage Wife, Helen Trent.* Listeners like to have one person with whom they can associate a program. This central character, or at most two characters, form a hub around which the various plots of the story can revolve. In most cases these central characters will be the protagonists of the story. They are always the good characters with whom the audience wishes to identify itself. They should be simple characters. Somerset Maugham may be able to write a novel like *Of Human Bondage* in which the central characters are weak, vacillating people, but the daytime serial writer cannot. Naturally, the more universal such a character can be, the wider will be the appeal. When serial dramas were in their formative stage, advertising agencies were always asking for a typical American family, or a typical American mother, or a typical American father, or a typical American businessman. Actually, what they wanted was not a typical person, but an idealized one. However, the endeavor to achieve universality in characterization was sound.

If we may judge by the programs on the air, most leading characters tend to fall into two categories. The first of these is the folksy character. In this instance the authors are striving to create a down-to-earth, human, kindly, and understanding person who might live next door. The other is the glamorous character. Writers following this path are working on the escapist principle and believe that listeners will be more interested in something completely foreign to their experience than in something which is a part of the everyday pattern of their lives. Thus, we have, on the one hand, Ma Perkins, who is the distillate of all understanding mothers everywhere, as opposed to Mary Noble in *Backstage Wife*, who is married to America's handsomest actor and who moves in the glamorous surroundings of Times Square and Shubert Alley. Both these formulas are time-tried and audience-tested. All sorts of variations on these two basic principles have been tried.

Most central characters in these scripts do not age or change. The element of time is usually ignored. That is to say, if the character was thirty-five years old when the program went on the air, ten years later he is still treated as thirty-five years old. Characters also remain static in their basic virtues or vices. They are what they were at the outset; the only change that occurs is a gradual unfolding of a character and a growing in depth of knowledge of the character on the part of the audience.

The author has a completely free hand in the matter of secondary characters. Most daytime serials have built up a large number of characters with whom the audience is familiar and who move in and out of the tapestry of the developing plot. Constant care must be taken that all these secondary characters are properly introduced each time they come into the script and clearly identified for the benefit of the casual tuner-in.

Secondary characters need not be all black or all white. They may be subject to human frailties and human weaknesses, even as you and I. They are not held to the paragon standard demanded of central characters. They can, therefore, often be more interesting and certainly create more problems than the central characters themselves. Even the antagonists need not be hopelessly beyond redemption. They need be only black enough to furnish a strong plot conflict. Such characters, skillfully written, can, over a period of time, become as real as any living person. Secondary characters, especially children, are sometimes allowed to age.

One fact will come home to the beginning writer who is fortunate enough to sell a serial program. He will learn, with something of a shock, perhaps, that the characters with which he peoples his script may become almost more real to his audience than they ever are to him. The author is aware that they are characters which he has created. The audience, not being bothered with this creative process, accepts them at their face value. They even assume a proprietary attitude about them. To the habitual listener, these characters become flesh-and-blood people; their problems are just as real and just as important as those of the next-door neighbor. Many listeners are quick to take pen in hand if the characters do something of which the listener does not approve. Listeners take these people personally!

Locale

Locale in the serial show is treated basically the same as in any other dramatic form, with one important exception. The locale must furnish a logical place for varied story development. It must be a place where stories *could* happen! Because the plot is spread over a long time, however, the audience has a chance to become much more familiar with the locale than it has in other dramatic forms. The writer, therefore, must really know his locale. The writer of a drama which is not a serial may be able to get by with a very sketchy scene-set if the locale of the play is not important. In the serial program, where the locale is a part of the program day in and day out, inaccuracies or lack of detail show up glaringly. It is interesting that in the daytime serial locales seem to group themselves on an occupational basis. There are programs about theater people, about nurses and doctors, about newspaper people, and so forth. The average family home in a small town is by all odds the most frequent locale for such programs. Skillful use of locale can do much to lend an air of reality to the program. The writer has time to build a complete locale which increases the listener's appreciation of the program. Listeners to *Vic and Sade,* for example, are thoroughly familiar with such well-known landmarks as the interurban station, the Butler House, and the Bright Kentucky Hotel. They are also very much aware of such interesting geographical oddities as Dismal Seepage, Ohio, and Sick River Junction, Wisconsin.

Dialogue

The handling of dialogue must be somewhat different in the serial program from that in any other kind of drama. Dialogue should be rather deliberate. It must be somewhat repetitive. The single planting of an idea or important point is not enough. The writer can never be sure that that exact moment may be the one in which the listener's full attention is riveted to the program. Major points must be repeated two or three times in a single ten minutes of dialogue. This is the only means by which the writer can be sure that his audience will learn everything he wants it to know. This repetition provides for the minutes or seconds during a broadcast when the woman of the house is distracted from listening by her household duties. Making dialogue repetitive without making it *sound* repetitive is a task which calls for skillful handling. The listener should not be aware that ideas are being repeated for her benefit. Repetition of the same idea by different characters in the script is often the best solution.

For several reasons dialogue is usually obvious. Serials dare not be esoteric. They must be understandable to all segments of the listening audience. This is a dangerous statement to make. It may give the writer the idea of writing down to his audience. If he does feel this condescension, it will inevitably show in the lines, and the audience will resent it. Rather, the approach should be this: the characters are fairly simple, straightforward people and therefore their dialogue should display these same qualities if it is to be right for the characters.

Structure

There are certain structural problems in the daytime serial. First of all, the continuing nature of the plot makes a synopsis necessary each day. The audience must be given the vital facts of the over-all program every day. They must also be told what in the story has immediately preceded today's broadcast, both for the benefit of new listeners and to refresh the memory of regular listeners. The résumé is a troublesome task for the writer. All sorts of techniques have been tried to enliven this comparatively uninteresting section of the program which, of necessity, must come at the beginning. In the second place, the audience's interest must be captured early in the broadcast. It is difficult, however, to do this by telling what has gone on before. The audience is interested in the clash of major characters in a conflict. It is less likely to be interested in previous clashes of these same characters. Nevertheless, the continued story simply does not make sense unless the audience knows a little about what has gone before.

The simplest, most obvious, and most economical way to solve this problem is to have the announcer read a résumé. Some writers have attempted to improve on this method. One serial program starts each day's broadcast by repeating the last thirty or forty seconds of the preceding day's script. In this way the climax of the previous day's action is redramatized. Attempts have been made at dramatic narration of the synopsis material. Many different ways of writing and streamlining the copy for the announcer have been tried in an attempt to find some way of making this synopsis interesting. No matter how it is done, it will take perhaps thirty-five or forty seconds. More often it runs a minute. One factor works in the author's favor here. The audience is just as aware as is the author of the necessity of this device. It has become a convention of daytime radio and as such it has been, if not accepted, at least tolerated.

Here is a fairly typical example of a synopsis handled by the announcer, who takes the rôle of narrator to do the lead-in. This example is from the program, *Ma Perkins*, broadcast over both CBS and NBC. The synopsis and introduction start immediately after the commercial and run as follows:

NARRATOR: Far from Rushville Center, Mathilda Pendleton is about to undergo an experience that may affect not only her but her family – and especially Ma. (SETTING THE MOST IMPORTANT MOOD IN WEEKS) Years ago . . . many years ago, a woman visited the home of her closest friend; a friend whose happiness was replete with husband and child; a visit that ended in a tragic divorce. The visitor was named corespondent. And that friend died with a curse on her lips . . . a curse on . . . yes, on Mathilda, who was *not* named Pendleton at that time. Now the tragedy of a past has reared its head. Augustus Pendleton is suspicious of his wife. And this in turn has sent Mathilda on a hurried mission . . . far from Rushville Center. (PAUSE.) It is midnight. Our scene is a rambling home located on a large estate just outside Kansas City. Mathilda has come here to face the man who once deserted his wife because of her. We find Mathilda seated in the hallway of this massive old home . . . nervously twisting her gloves . . .

SOUND: TICKING OF GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK FADES IN.

NARRATOR (AFTER A MOMENT OF TICKING): A grandfather's clock near-by ticks away the seconds as if there were no hurry, nothing to be accomplished in the whole world . . .

This lead-in serves three functions: it tells the audience some of the story of the preceding few days; it introduces some new material not known by the audience before; and it sets the locale and mood of the opening scene of the script. The lead-in is usually followed directly by the story itself.

Another integral part of most daytime serials is a lead-out. In this portion of the script the announcer or narrator may make some comment on the day's developments; in almost every case he asks a rhetorical question or two calculated to pique the interest of the audience and encourage it to listen the following day. Here is the lead-out of a script for *The Woman in White.*

> ANNOUNCER: It certainly is typical of Paul that he's putting his cards on the table for everyone to see – calling Doctor Wilton's bluff, so to speak. But I can't help wondering if it will turn out to have been the smart thing to do. Doctor Wilton is an old hand at this game – and Paul is new at it. He may be stretching his beginner's luck to show his hand at this point.

Although it is not stated obviously in the above lead-out, nevertheless there is a strong invitation implied to listen in and see how the hero fares. This is the chief function of the lead-out.

The over-all structure of the daytime serial might be outlined in this way:

1. Theme music (or the title of the program)
2. Title of the program (or theme music)
3. Commercial
4. Lead-in
5. Script proper
6. Music
7. Lead-out
8. Commercial
9. Theme music
10. Sign off

The order of these items varies somewhat, but the nature of them seldom does. These elements appear in almost every daytime serial on the air and the order listed here is the one most commonly used.

The production design

For three very good reasons, the production design of the daytime serial is kept very simple:

1. Cost must be kept down.
2. Rehearsal time must be reasonable (usually one hour).
3. A simply designed and performed program can be more readily comprehended.

When a program is broadcast five times a week, the cost is rather high. An extremely complex production which necessitates a long rehearsal period each day will add still more to the cost of the program. These are not artistic matters and have nothing to do with the structure of serial drama; they are physical and financial factors which cannot be ignored.

Most transitions are achieved either by fade-ins and fade-outs, or by simple organ music of an appropriate nature. While the silent transition is best used to indicate a lapse of time, it may also be used for other kinds of transitions.

Elaborate production techniques should be avoided in daytime serials for the same reason. Sound effects and musical treatment are usually kept simple and follow a rather obvious pattern. For the most part, sound is confined to the customary use of doors, steps, bells, automobiles, and the other conventional effects. Music is usually furnished by the organ, because it is flexible and inexpensive. Its use is most often confined to simple musical transitions and a theme to give the program time flexibility.

Serials habitually use comparatively little drama in a high key. Time is needed to work up to a tremendously exciting scene, and the serial dramatist does not have that time available in a fifteen-minute program. The actual playing time, exclusive of commercials and synopsis, lead-out, and theme music, may run as little as eight or nine minutes. It is difficult to pick up an audience cold and shove it into a fast-moving, highly exciting series of dramatic scenes in as short a time as that. Drama in a high key requires the laying of some groundwork and psychological preparation of the audience to enjoy or appreciate it. The serial writer cannot often indulge in such an approach. Very few writers would wish to. Drama played intensely and at a high key uses up plot and dialogue too quickly. Therefore, the bulk of the programs are played in a fairly low dramatic key, coming up only occasionally during a series. In few cases is extremely intense writing or acting used.

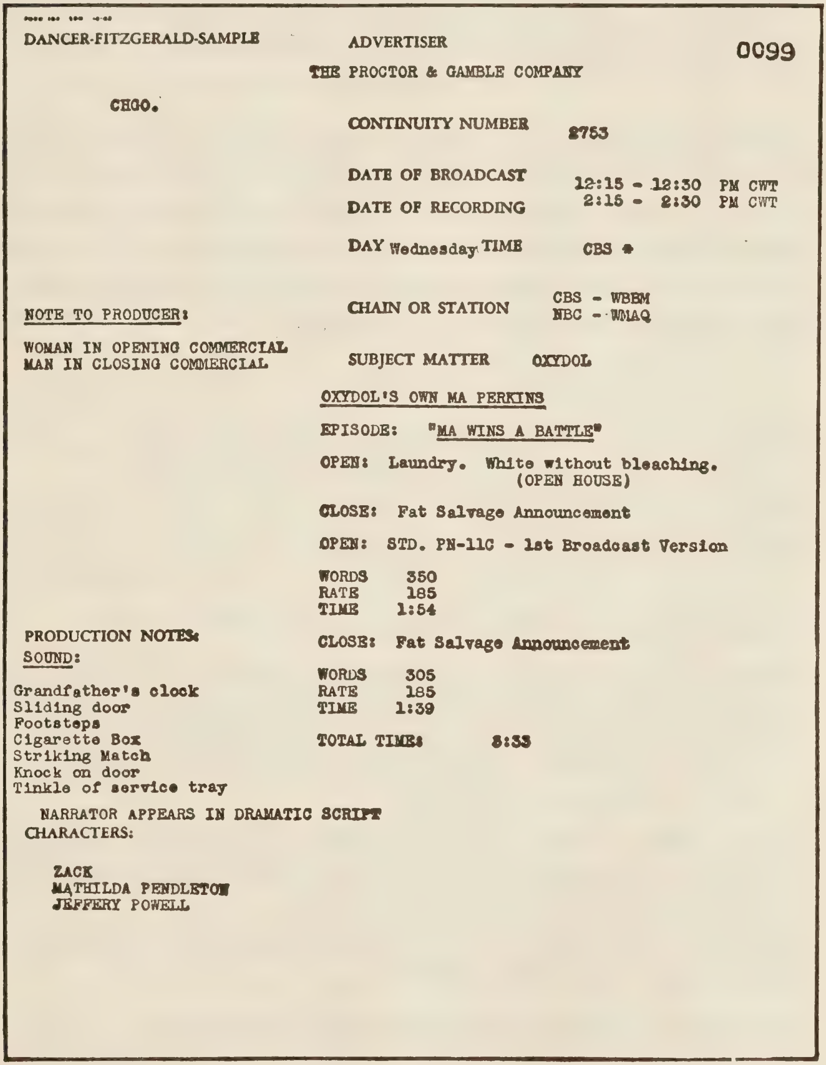
Miscellaneous problems

There are some miscellaneous problems in the writing of serial programs which cannot be ignored. Only the exceptional writer can face a deadline day in and day out, week in and week out, without showing occasional symptoms of apoplexy. The constant pressure of having to turn out ten minutes of dialogue every day can produce very disturbing effects. The time eventually comes when it seems impossible to get those same poor characters into *any* kind of trouble. There is not only the problem itself, but the fear of the problem. At some time or other, almost every serial writer faces it. He lives in dread of running dry. He wonders where his next plot-line is coming from. He worries for fear the agency may not renew his contract for the program, and eventually he may arrive at the state where he fears that they *will* renew it, and he will have to keep on thinking up new plots.

Writing drama, even of the kind used for daytime serials, is a personal thing. It cannot be easily shifted from one writer to another. Therefore, serial writers seldom get vacations. They have to write the year around, five days out of seven. There is no summer lay-off, such as the writer of big-time evening programs enjoys. This constant pressure is one of the greatest problems in serial writing.

There is no sure antidote for this problem. The only precaution a writer can take is to stay as far ahead of his deadlines as possible. He must take advantage of those days when ideas and dialogue seem to flow freely and smoothly and produce as much as he can to compensate for those days when nothing comes. Confidence that ideas will come and consistent daily work are the only preventives that can be prescribed. Human nature being what it is, these are generally useless. The writer might as well make up his mind to be slightly unhappy on this one score.

The daytime serial has been, for the past several years, the storm center of considerable criticism leveled at radio drama. Most of this criticism is unintelligent and based on little evidence collected from actual listening. Much more of it is based on the simple principle of individual difference in taste. There is probably little question that there are too many such pro-



DANCER-FITZGERALD-SAMPLE

ADVERTISER
THE PROCTOR & GAMBLE COMPANY

0099

CHGO.

CONTINUITY NUMBER 2753

DATE OF BROADCAST 12:15 - 12:30 PM CWT
DATE OF RECORDING 2:15 - 2:30 PM CWT

DAY Wednesday TIME CBS *

CHAIN OR STATION CBS - WBBM
NBC - WMAQ

NOTE TO PRODUCER:

WOMAN IN OPENING COMMERCIAL
MAN IN CLOSING COMMERCIAL

SUBJECT MATTER OXYDOL

OXYDOL'S OWN MA PERKINS

EPISODE: "MA WINS A BATTLE"

OPEN: Laundry. White without bleaching.
(OPEN HOUSE)

CLOSE: Fat Salvage Announcement

OPEN: STD. PN-11C - 1st Broadcast Version

WORDS 350
RATE 185
TIME 1:54

PRODUCTION NOTES:

SOUND:

CLOSE: Fat Salvage Announcement

WORDS 305
RATE 185
TIME 1:39

TOTAL TIME: 8:33

Grandfather's clock
Sliding door
Footsteps
Cigarette Box
Striking Match
Knock on door
Tinkle of service tray

NARRATOR APPEARS IN DRAMATIC SCRIPT

CHARACTERS:

ZACK
MATHILDA PENDLETON
JEFFERY POWELL

grams on the air. Certainly no one would pretend that they are an unmixed blessing to radio.

However, the reader, who presumably is interested in becoming a radio writer, need not be concerned about the controversy. It is a fact that there are many daytime serials on the air. It is also a fact that many of them are very popular. It is a fact that these serials offer a definite market for the radio writer. That is all a writer needs to know about the controversy. The sponsors and the audiences will cast the final vote about the desirablity of the type.

If a single program should be chosen as a typical example of the daytime serial, it should probably be *Ma Perkins.* Year in and year out, through the vicissitudes of changing writers and all other problems that serial programs are heir to, this program has maintained a huge following. As a sample, then, here is a typical script from *Ma Perkins.*

OPEN

NARRATOR: For a wash that's white without bleaching . . . use Oxydol with its lively, active, Hustle Bubble suds.

BUSINESS: THEME IN FULL — FADE FOR:

NARRATOR: Oxydol's Own Ma Perkins.[1]

BUSINESS: CONTINUE THEME — FADE DOWN FOR FIRST LINE OF COMMERCIAL.

BUSINESS: COMMERCIAL WORD COUNT STARTS.

NARRATOR: Here at the high school, in Rushville Center,[2] they teach domestic science. Well, at the end of the term the girls taking the course held a sort of open house to show their parents and relatives how much they'd learned. Mrs. Campbell was telling me about it . . .

WOMAN: Why, Charlie, when my daughter Jean gets married, she'll know more about cooking and housekeeping than I did. Were you at the open house, Charlie?

NARRATOR: Yes, I was. And I think you're right. The cakes those girls made really were *delicious.*

---

[1] The title here is taken from the name of the central character.

[2] Notice that the locale is established in the first line of the commercial.

WOMAN: Did you eat any of the angel-food cake? Jean made that one.

NARRATOR: It tasted fine. Tell Jean I said they certainly taught her how to make fine cakes.

WOMAN: I'll do that.

NARRATOR: You can tell her, too, that I said the tables certainly looked pretty.

WOMAN: Didn't they, though? Jean and Betty Howard brought the tablecloths from home. (NARRATOR AD-LIB ACKNOWLEDGMENT.) But you know, Charlie, seeing one of my tablecloths beside Mrs. Howard's sort of upset me –

NARRATOR: How's that?

WOMAN: Well, her tablecloth was so much whiter than mine. Why, hers was so white that I asked her if she'd bleached it?

NARRATOR: What'd she say?

WOMAN: She said, "No, indeed!" That she just washed it in Oxydol and it came that white without bleaching!

NARRATOR: Well, Mrs. Campbell told me she was going to try Oxydol her very next washday! So by now I guess she knows *why* Oxydol can wash clothes white without bleaching! You will, too – when you see Oxydol's Hustle Bubble suds at *work.* Those suds are so active they *lift* dirt out! That's why clothes come clean without hard rubbing! And that's why tablecloths, sheets, towels – *all* your white things, except maybe for medicine stains or such, come white without bleaching! Sparkling white!

Active as those suds are, Oxydol's really safe for wash colors and rayons.

So when you go shopping, get that famous orange and blue bull's-eye package of Oxydol. On washday you'll enjoy a wash that's white without bleaching. The way Mrs. Campbell's doing now here in Rushville Center!

BUSINESS: COMMERCIAL WORD COUNT ENDS.

NARRATOR: News travels quickly in a small town,[3] and Mrs. Campbell, like many other women, was inquisitive about Ma's sudden trip to Kansas City.[4] Well, Ma returned, with the object of her trip, Mathilda Pendleton, *tonight.* Mathilda was frightened. Augustus Pendleton stormed into Ma's house, but when he assumed that Mathilda was not there, he became almost penitent. Ma was delighted with his change of heart, but when Ma told Augustus that his wife *was* there, he reverted to his regular self, making wild accusations against Mathilda and demanding explanations. But from being frightened, Mathilda suddenly changed to being defiant, and, after giving Augustus no quarter, hurried back upstairs.[5] It's a few minutes later now. Ma has just come back downstairs and is on her way to the kitchen . . . [6]

---

[3] Notice the reinforcement of the scene setting.

[4] Here begins the day's synopsis.

MOOD: (MA IS UNDER A NERVOUS TENSION — SHE CALLS NOT TOO LOUDLY BECAUSE OF GARY.)

MA: Oh, Fay . . . Willy. Willy . . .

SOUND: DOOR OPENING OFF.

WILLY (OFF — HOLDING HIS VOICE DOWN): Yeah, Ma?

MA: Come on out here, Willy, you and Fay.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSING.

WILLY (EXCITEDLY): What happened, Ma? Boy, did he sound mad! [7] We couldn't hear it all back there in the kitchen.

FAY: Where did Mr. Pendleton go, Ma?

MA: Now, now, one question at a time . . . Mr. Pendleton's left. He went on home, Fay.

WILLY: Is Mathilda still he . . .

MA: She's upstairs with Evey, Willy. . . . Now, look, Fay. I want to talk to Evey. You run upstairs and stay with Mathilda. Tell Evey to come on down. And if you can get Mathilda to go to bed and to sleep, fine.

FAY (MOVING OFF): Right away, Ma. I'll go right on up.

WILLY: Well, what happened, Ma? Tell me!

MA (DISTURBED): Willy, a lot happened. But it's not so much what's already happened; it's what might happen. Tell me quick: how has Gary Curtis been behaving while I've been away?

WILLY: Well, Ma, to tell you the truth, he's been kinda sullen.

---

[5] Notice that this synopsis makes no reference to the over-all story idea, but plunges immediately into the story of the preceding day. Some writers use an over-all synopsis as well. Notice, too, that this synopsis refers to characters who have previously appeared, leaving the characters in this episode to establish themselves.

[6] Synopses or lead-ins usually end as this one does with a one- or two-sentence setting of the first scene.

[7] Notice how quickly a sense of conflict is established.

MA: Sullen?

WILLY: I, I don't know what happened, Ma. Something between Gary and Fay and Gladys Pendleton. Fay hasn't said much about it herself, but she did say Gladys slapped Gary . . . [8]

MA (AMAZED): Gladys slapped Gary?

WILLY: Fay's been kinda funny, Ma. She hasn't been saying anything. She and Evey have talked some, but not too much. Me, I've been staying out of it. I don't know, Ma. I don't know what it's all about . . .

MA (OVERLAPPING): Well, here comes Evey now . . . Come on in, Evey . . . better close the door.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSING OFF.

WILLY: Ma, you want me to . . . ? (HE LEAVES IT IMPLIED)

MA: No, Willy, you can stay.

EVEY (COMING UP): But, Willy, don't you start saying what you think!

WILLY (OUTRAGED INNOCENCE): I'm not saying what I think, Evey! Do I ever butt into things that don't concern me? (MUMBLING) Oh, well, okeh.

MA (CONCERNED): How's everything upstairs, Evey?

EVEY: Mathilda's quieted down some. I think she'll probably go to bed after a little. But tell me, Ma, what on earth happened?

MA (CONCERNED): That's what I wanted to talk to you about . . .

EVEY: All I know is Mathilda heard Mr. Pendleton down here. I tried to stop her, but she insisted on listening. Then she came on down.

MA: Well, Evey, Mr. Pendleton first assumed Mathilda was here. But I didn't tell him she was or she wasn't. Then he assumed she wasn't. And he got all sorrowful about it. Said he'd do anything if she'd come back; he'd get down on his knees, and he'd tell her the past was all forgotten. Well, that was what I hoped for. I guess Mathilda, too. 'Cause that was evidently what she heard when she started down. I thought it was going to be a joyful reunion. But the minute I told him she was here . . . well, he started ranting and raving, and that was when she walked in . . . [9]

---

[8] This fact is important. Notice how many times it is repeated. The relationship between Gary and Gladys also is a sub-plot being carried along with the Pendleton story.

[9] This entire speech is a repetition of the synopsis, illustrating how repetition can be accomplished smoothly.

WILLY: Ma, what was that he said about . . . ?

EVEY: Now, Willy!

WILLY: Oh, pardon me. Pardon me, Evey. (MUMBLING) Pardon me all to pieces.

MA: Well, anyhow, Mathilda really went after him. Said she wasn't going to be a slave for him any longer. Said she didn't have to explain anything to him, and she wasn't going to.

EVEY: She said *that?*

MA: Said more'n that . . .

EVEY: I can hardly believe it! Why, Ma, Mathilda's been scared to death of Mr. Pendleton! She's been afraid to tell him what happened in the past . . . why, Ma, that's what caused the whole thing!

MA: Evey . . . don't forget . . . Mathilda saw Jeffery Powell in Kansas City. And Mr. Powell's still in love with her.

EVEY: But even so, Ma . . . oh . . . wait a minute . . .

MA: Don't you see, Evey? Well, I'll tell you what I told Mr. Pendleton after I got Mathilda out of the room. I told him he was driving his wife into another man's arms . . .

WILLY: Wow! You mean this guy Powers . . . Powell, Ma?

EVEY: Willy! Will you please let Ma and me discuss this thing?

MA: That's exactly who I meant, Willy.

WILLY: What's his name, Ma? Now, now Evey! Don't look at me like that. I just asked a question . . . that's all.

EVEY (TURNING FROM WILLY): Well . . . Ma, you think Mathilda is . . . is . . .

MA: Mathilda's a woman who loves luxury, Evey. Augustus Pendleton's been able to supply her with a good bank account. I hope there's more there than just that.[10] But that much we know. On the train back, Mathilda told me herself that . . . well, her words were, "Jeff's got money, too."

EVEY: You mean, Ma, she's . . . she's thinking of . . .

WILLY: Why, Evey, it's as plain as the nose on your . . . All right, I forgot.

MA: It's no conjecture, Evey. Mathilda told me herself she wondered why she stays married to a man like Augustus Pendleton!

EVEY: Ma! Then Mathilda *is* right on the verge of a divorce![11] (ADDING) But not the way we thought . . .

---

[10] Notice how this speech helps to expose Mathilda's character. The audience knows more about her after this episode even though she does not appear.

[11] This statement is one of the few plot developments in this episode.

MA: Mathilda says marriage can become a habit. But *I* still believe there's love there. There must have been in the beginning. There must be some of it left. It's sort of like a coat or something you gradually quit wearing. The first thing you know, you think it's gone. But if you look around the house hard enough, you can find it . . . [12]

WILLY: Can I say something, Ma?

MA: Go ahead, Willy. What?

WILLY: I just wanted to say you're right. You're right, Ma. (NO ANSWER) That's right. (NO ANSWER) (FEELING FOOLISH) Well, that's all.

EVEY: Now are you satisfied?

WILLY (UNCOMFORTABLY): I just wanted to say Ma was right, Evey.

EVEY: Well, you've said it! Ma . . . you think . . . Mathilda is through with him?

MA: I think I gave Mr. Pendleton a pretty good awakening. I don't say Mathilda shouldn't have explained what happened between her and Jeffery Powell a long time ago. And I believe Mathilda would have explained . . . only, only Mr. Pendleton's had her half-scared to death . . .

EVEY: But, Ma, even if he's willing to listen to her and be reasonable . . . what if she won't go home to talk to him?

WILLY: What if she intends going back to Kansas City, Ma? To this what's-his-name guy?

EVEY: Never mind what his name is, Willy! Can't you . . . ?

WILLY: Okeh, Evey, Okeh.

MA (THOUGHTFULLY): I think . . . I don't think Mathilda's got that far in her own thinking, Evey. I didn't want her to declare herself on that to Mr. Pendleton. And that's why I shoved her out of the room. Once Mathilda declared herself, it would have been the end. And that's why I wanted to talk to you tonight, Evey. The chances are Mathilda'll go to bed, but she won't go to sleep. Now, you and Mathilda have been good friends, for a long time, Evey. I want you to stay with her tonight and do all the talking you can. Try to get her to go on back home tomorrow morning.

---

[12] This speech is a perfect example of the philosophy expressed by most daytime serial leads. It is a definite and obvious expression of goodness. This statement is a paraphrase of the *theme* of the *program*.

EVEY (A BIT DUBIOUSLY): Well, naturally I'll do what I can, Ma . . .

MA: I saw that man in Kansas City, Evey. He's awfully attractive. Mathilda *could* be mighty swayed. We've got to do everything we can, Evey. Marriage is a sacred thing and we're going to preserve this one. (ADDING) Mathilda asked me to help her and . . . and I'm going to do it.

EVEY (WRYLY): When Mathilda asked you to help her, she thought it was the other way around . . .

MA: It can still be that way for all we know. This all might be bluster on Mathilda's part. I still say there's love there . . . somewhere. And if Mathilda leaves Mr. Pendleton, she's going to regret it. (ABOUT TO DISMISS EVEY) Now I suppose . . . oh, wait a minute! What's this about Gladys slapping Gary, Evey? [13]

WILLY: I told Ma, Evey . . .

EVEY: Yes, I can see you did, Willy.

WILLY: Okeh.

EVEY: Ma . . . all I know is what Fay told me. Fay only heard part of it. Gladys came over one morning and Gary immediately accused her of telling *you* his father was in Kansas City.

MA: Oh . . . (REFLECTIVELY) Yes, Gladys did tell me . . .

EVEY: As I get it, Gary resents the fact that you and Mathilda went there . . . and he assumes you went to see his father . . .

WILLY: Say! You mean this what's-his-name guy in Kansas City is Gary's old man?

EVEY (SARCASTICALLY): Well, for heaven's sake! Yes, Willy!

WILLY (WEAKENING UNDER HER STARE): Well . . . well, boy . . . that's terrific . . . (FIZZLES OUT) (QUICKLY TO HIMSELF) Mathilda in love with Gary's old man, huh.

MA (LISTENING): Who's that coming down the stairs?

SOUND: MUFFLED FOOTSTEPS.

EVEY (HEAVY WHISPER): Ma, that sounds like . . .

WILLY (HEAVY WHISPER): That's Gary now! That's *his* footsteps! Betcha a nickel!

SOUND: DOOR OPENING OFF.

MA: Well . . . hello, Gary.

GARY (WITH HALF-CONCEALED RESENTMENT): Oh . . . I heard your voice, Ma. I *thought* you might be with someone else.

---

[13] Here is the second repetition of a fact which is important to the development of the plot.

MA: No . . . Just Evey and Willy.

GARY: Well, I didn't mean to interrupt a family tête-à-tête . . . but, Ma?

MA: Yes, Gary?

GARY: I want to talk to *you* in the morning.[14]

MA: Very well, Gary. We'll talk . . . in the morning.

GARY: Well . . . that's all.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSING.

WILLY (HEAVY WHISPER): Say! What do you think he meant by that, Ma?

CLOSE

NARRATOR: Well, Willy . . . that's what we'd like to know. Just what *does* Gary Curtis want to talk about to Ma in the morning? And I *don't* think Ma herself knows . . . Not yet.[15]

BUSINESS: COMMERCIAL WORD COUNT STARTS.

NARRATOR: You know Mrs. Harris is another one of the many women in Rushville Center who use Oxydol for dishwashing as well as for laundry. Not long ago she was telling me about it.

WOMAN: Yes, Charlie, I figured a soap that can wash clothes white without bleaching . . . a soap *that* good at laundry should be more than a match for dishwashing grease.

NARRATOR: Right! Oxydol's Hustle Bubble suds are so lively, they actually dissolve dishpan grease. Not just "cut" it or "loosen" it . . . but really *dissolve* that grease! And suds that active stay plenty lively till the last dish and pan are sparkling bright again!

WOMAN: But Oxydol's not strong or harsh.

NARRATOR: No, indeed! Why, just look at your hands. They're as smooth and pretty as any woman could want!

WOMAN: Why, thank you, Charlie!

NARRATOR: But why don't every one of you *listening* try Oxydol yourself! See how it dissolves stubborn dishpan grease!

---

[14] So far in this episode there has been no dramatic action. It concerns itself completely with talk of events which have already transpired. This line, together with the fact that Gary is angry about something which has already been established, indicates that excitement is imminent. This promise of action is put in to carry the audience over to the next episode.

[15] This is part of the announcer's lead-out.

BUSINESS: COMMERCIAL WORD COUNT ENDS.

NARRATOR: Well, tomorrow at this time we'll hear Gary Curtis say . . .

GARY (SEETHING WITH HATRED): Ma . . . I've tried awfully hard to like you. I've tried to go along with you. And I've tried to believe in you. Now I'm going to tell you why I *can't* believe in you . . . I *won't* go along with you, and . . . I *think* I'm beginning to hate you . . . [16]

NARRATOR: By *all means* be sure to listen to Ma Perkins again tomorrow! Until tomorrow, then, this is Charlie Warren saying, "So-long" . . . (CONFIDENTIALLY ASIDE) And remember Oxydol, won't you?

BUSINESS: THEME UP AND THEN OUT CLEAN FOR THIS HITCH-HIKE. COMMERCIAL WORD COUNT STARTS.

NARRATOR: Remember soap is made from vital war materials! So don't waste soap! Always measure your Oxydol instead of pouring it from the package. Then you won't use more than you need!

COMMERCIAL WORD COUNT ENDS.

BUSINESS: THEME IF NECESSARY — PREFERABLY NO THEME AT ALL HERE.

THE EPISODIC DRAMA

The episodic drama is one in which each story involves the same central characters, but in which a complete story is told in each broadcast. There are numerous episodic dramas on the air, most of them being half an hour long and broadcast for an evening audience. *Big Town, Henry Aldrich, Mr. and Mrs. North,* and *Sherlock Holmes* are all episodic dramas. While all the basic rules governing the writing of radio drama apply to this specific type, there are a few special problems which need discussion.

The theme

The episodic drama sometimes requires two themes, one for the over-all series and one for the specific episode. In many cases the two are the same. Aside from this possible duality, there are no special problems. The theme of an episodic drama is not hedged in by the stringent restrictions which govern theme in the serial drama. Within broad limits, the writer has a free hand.

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[16] Here a dramatized preview is used as part of the lead-out to attract listeners to the next episode.

The plot

The episodic drama form has certain inherent problems in plot. The first step in plotting an episodic drama is the creation of a framework within which each episode occurs. This framework must conform to certain specifications. It must be one in which a great many stories could logically occur. There are at least three ways of building this frame. First, the writer can create the kind of character (or characters) to which exciting things can happen. Robin Hood would be such a character. Being the kind of person he was, he inevitably sought all sorts of adventures. Secondly, a satisfactory framework might be created by building it around people whose occupations might bring them in contact with stories. Policemen, detectives, doctors, or Pullman porters might all have access to many stories. Finally, the framework might be built around a locale where stories might frequently occur. Hospitals, railway stations, police headquarters, and newspaper offices are all places where stories occur.

The framework should also be one in which the stories tend to be brief and dramatic. Stories which stretch over a long time span or stories with very complex development are hard to compress into the space of a half-hour broadcast.

The framework is so called because it nearly always furnishes the opening of the episodic drama and frequently provides the closing scene. It will appear in some manner in each broadcast.

Having created a satisfactory framework, each script must have within it a complete story including a conflict, rising action, change of balance of power, climax, and resolution. The general rules are the same as those of the unit drama, except that it must fit logically into the framework.

It is not obligatory that the characters in the framework be the protagonists of each plot. They may be only confidants of the central character — or they may be only observers and reporters of the story. However, a more closely knit show always results when one of the framework characters is also the protagonist.

It is obligatory that the plot used be in harmony with the framework. There must be an acceptable unity between the over-all structure and the specific story. It should, in other words, be a story which would logically happen within the established framework.

Many examples of this type of radio drama can be cited. It is a formula which has been used for a long time by writers of detective stories. They recognize the value of a continuing framework even in a work as long as a novel. Many interesting characters have been created by detective writers and used in a series of novels. The same principle applies to the episodic radio drama. In *The Adventures of the Thin Man* a private investigator and his wife are the central characters. In each broadcast they become involved in some crime and solve it before the show is over. In *Big Town* the central characters are a city editor and a girl reporter who each week solve a crime or go on a civic crusade. It is easy to see how in each of these cases the framework creates a situation in which stories can believably happen.

Characters

The characters in an episodic drama must be keyed to the basic plot situation. The framework will, by its very nature, include one or more basic characters around whom the whole series may revolve. These will be the characters which show up week after week, not only in the framework, but in many cases in the story itself. The specifications for these framework characters have already been discussed. The number of characters in the framework should be small. This holds cast costs down and allows for the proper simplicity of the story. If too many people are involved, relationships have to be established among all of them each week before the current story can get under way. Then, too, if there are too many characters involved in the framework, there is no room left for the characters of the specific story to be told. Remember, an audience has difficulty in keeping track of more than six major characters in any one story sequence. If a situation can be created which requires only one or two continuing characters, so much the better.

In addition to the characters which people the framework of the episodic drama, there will be a normal complement of actors required by the story itself. The kind of people chosen will be determined, of course, by the specific script. Since episodic drama comes in such a wide variety of packages, it is impossible to generalize on either the drawing or projecting of central characters. Aside from those factors, plotting the unit drama is the same as plotting any other kind of dramatic program about which we have talked this far.

Locale

Locale in the serial drama presents no special difficulties, except in the matter of the framework. The basic locale must be chosen with extreme care according to the specifications set forth in the discussion of the framework. It must be a place where things tend to happen. The locale of the story within the framework presents only the usual problems.

Dialogue

Dialogue in an episodic drama follows the standard set of requirements already outlined for general drama. The dialogue must suit both the story and the character of the leading individual.

Miscellaneous problems

Sound and music are used rather liberally in this kind of program. This is not because of the kind of program it happens to be, so much as because of the time when and the frequency with which it is broadcast. Most episodic programs are given once a week at some time during the evening. Nighttime programs are the big-time of radio. Therefore, more time, attention, and money are spent on them than on most of the daytime shows. Often the sound will be elaborate, and the music is frequently written especially for the program. This kind of production, of course, costs money and is vouchsafed only to the more important programs. Production can be, and is, as elaborate as the sponsor and the director think necessary. There is seldom much effort to economize in production.

Because of their episodic nature, and because they must complete a story each week, such programs are usually played in a fairly high dramatic key and at a fast pace. The content of this kind of script nearly always calls for a more careful and more elaborate production than the slower, shorter program. This is another reason for the more or less lavish use of music and sound in the episodic drama.

There are certain advantages and certain disadvantages inherent in this type of program. The beginner should be aware of all these, so that he can avoid the pitfalls and exploit all the opportunities.

The greatest difficulty in this kind of program is that it limits the author considerably in his choice of story. He is tied to one central character or a small group of characters; he is also in most cases tied to a given locale. If the central characters are free to roam around, the writer enjoys some latitude, but the situation is still limited by the framework. Thus, if the central character is a doctor, the writer can use only stories which might occur in the life of a physician.

The second difficulty lies in the necessity for establishing each week the framework of the show. Each script must contain an opening routine which is designed to acquaint new listeners with the framework and the central characters. It will often demand a close to which the writer must come back after he has finished the climax of the story. The opening tends to get the show off to a slow start for listeners who are familiar with it, and the close tends to make the climax somewhat less gripping because of the necessity of coming back to the framework. It is possible by skillful writing to offset these disadvantages somewhat. However, they can never be completely eliminated because they are inherent in the format of the program.

As opposed to these difficulties, the format of the episodic drama offers certain definite advantages which the writer must recognize and use to the fullest.

The first advantage is the length of time between broadcasts. A schedule of one broadcast a week gives the writer and the production director a chance to keep fresh, time to do good work, and enough time for rehearsal to prepare the program adequately. Compared with the grind of the five-a-week serial, this program requires almost as much work, but that work is concentrated on one program instead of spread over five. The result should be, and often is, a better program.

In the second place, the audience has a chance to become acquainted with the central characters. In this way the episodic drama parallels the serial drama. Frequent appearances of the same characters allow those characters to develop and unfold for the audience (and for the writer) in the same way that they do in the serial program. The use of many of the same characters is an advantage to the writer also. For each show he must do a certain amount of work in advance. If, as in the episodic drama a third of the characters which will have to be used in the show are already in existence and their characteristics known, his work is correspondingly lightened. These will be the central characters in the framework.

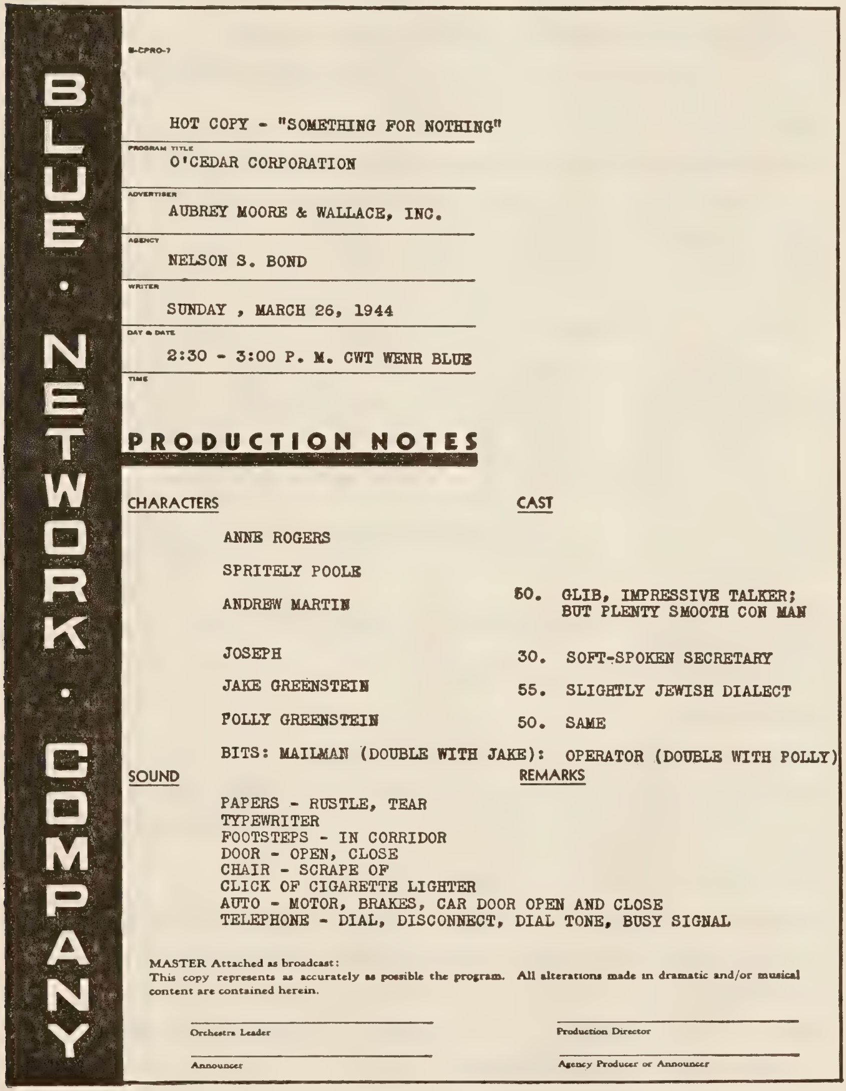
In the third place, the audience is familiar with the locale. Hearing the same people in the same surroundings each week, the audience becomes acquainted with and understands the locale in the episodic drama. Conceivably, the locale can become almost as real as the settings in the daily serial shows. Habitual listeners to a well-written episodic drama soon learn many of the details about a locale which make it interesting.

The final advantage of the episodic drama is the fact that it can deliver a complete story at one sitting. Certainly, for the casual listener, this format is superior. Those who are not. and never have been, serial listeners shy away from such programs in exactly the same way that a casual reader picking up a magazine will almost invariably choose one of the complete stories rather than one chapter of a continued story. Moreover, the episodic drama is somewhat easier to write than almost any other kind. The framework is set, the central characters are created, the lines of major action are fairly well demarcated. And there is not the ever-present sword of Damocles which hangs over the writer of the daily program. He can write a complete story without having to dovetail it into the episode that preceded it or the one that is to follow it.

From a sponsor's point of view, the episodic drama has some advantages, too, which the writer should know. It sometimes becomes necessary to take programs off the air, put them back on at a different time, and perhaps even on a different network. Such changes are difficult to make with a daytime serial, where each chapter means something and where once the story-line is broken, it may be difficult to pick up. The episodic drama, because it lacks a continuing story-line, can be changed with less loss of audience. The sponsor may even take it off the air for a short period of time and hope to have some of his audience return when the broadcast schedule is resumed. The name value that can be built up around the continuous program has considerable importance to the sponsor. After all, it takes time and money to make an audience familiar with a name. If the episodic drama has a specific name and a specific set of characters that can be remembered, then it can be broadcast at almost any time.

Typical of the episodic type of radio drama is the program *Hot Copy* which is aired over the Blue Network on Sunday afternoons. As the title implies, this is a newspaper story. The central character is a girl, Anne Rogers, who writes a column in the paper called "Second Glance." It is in the search for copy for this column that Anne finds all the stories which are dramatized on *Hot Copy*. A private detective, who is a good friend of Anne's, often appears in the series. Spritely Poole, an addlepated friend of Anne's, shares an apartment and office space on the same paper. These characters are the nucleus around which the series of stories is built. The framework situation is given as little time as possible, so that the major emphasis is always on the present story.

In order that the student may have a pattern for this kind of program, a complete script of one of the *Hot Copy* series is



BLUE · NETWORK · COMPANY

B-CPRO-7

HOT COPY - "SOMETHING FOR NOTHING"
PROGRAM TITLE

O'CEDAR CORPORATION
ADVERTISER

AUBREY MOORE & WALLACE, INC.
AGENCY

NELSON S. BOND
WRITER

SUNDAY , MARCH 26, 1944
DAY & DATE

2:30 - 3:00 P. M. CWT WENR BLUE
TIME

PRODUCTION NOTES

CHARACTERS	CAST
ANNE ROGERS	
SPRITELY POOLE	
ANDREW MARTIN	50. GLIB, IMPRESSIVE TALKER; BUT PLENTY SMOOTH CON MAN
JOSEPH	30. SOFT-SPOKEN SECRETARY
JAKE GREENSTEIN	55. SLIGHTLY JEWISH DIALECT
POLLY GREENSTEIN	50. SAME

BITS: MAILMAN (DOUBLE WITH JAKE): OPERATOR (DOUBLE WITH POLLY)

SOUND | REMARKS

PAPERS - RUSTLE, TEAR
TYPEWRITER
FOOTSTEPS - IN CORRIDOR
DOOR - OPEN, CLOSE
CHAIR - SCRAPE OF
CLICK OF CIGARETTE LIGHTER
AUTO - MOTOR, BRAKES, CAR DOOR OPEN AND CLOSE
TELEPHONE - DIAL, DISCONNECT, DIAL TONE, BUSY SIGNAL

MASTER Attached as broadcast:
This copy represents as accurately as possible the program. All alterations made in dramatic and/or musical content are contained herein.

Orchestra Leader
Production Director
Announcer
Agency Producer or Announcer

reproduced here. Study it to see how the standard structure of the series is superimposed on the story for this broadcast. The only characters from the regular framework in this particular story are Anne Rogers and Sergeant Flannigan. All the others are characters who appear only in this episode.

ANNOUNCER: O-Cedar, the greatest name in housekeeping, presents . . . Hot Copy!

ORGAN: OPENING THEME — DOWN AND OUT UNDER:

SOUND: FAINT CLICKS (MOVEMENT OF CHESSMEN ON BOARD AT INFREQUENT INTERVALS) AD-LIB UNDER:

KING (SOTTO — MUSING): Let's see, now . . . move the black Queen to King's rook four . . . and check. White must take his bishop . . . If more of my patients played chess, they'd . . .

SOUND: CLICK OF LATCH — DOOR OPEN SOFTLY.

KING: What . . . ? Who . . . ? Oh, *you*, eh? Well, what are you doing back here? I thought you had gone . . . Wait a minute! Now . . . now, look here! Don't do . . . something you'll regret. Suppose you sit down . . . cool off a bit? See . . . I'm not afraid. I'll sit right here and do this chess problem, while we talk matters over . . . (FORCED LAUGH) . . . You see? We can solve both problems at once . . . I'm a reasonable man.

SOUND: GUNSHOTS.

KING (AFTER PAUSE — WITH DIFFICULTY): A . . . reasonable . . . man . . .

SOUND: SLUMP OF BODY TO FLOOR — DOOR CLOSE.

ORGAN: STINGER.

ANNOUNCER: LEAD-IN COMMERCIAL.

COMMERCIAL.

ORGAN: UP BRIDGE — DOWN AND OUT UNDER:

ANNOUNCER: And now . . . a new and dramatic story of Anne Rogers's search for Hot Copy . . . "Death to Play and Mate!"

ORGAN: UP FOR BRIDGE — DOWN AND OUT UNDER:

SOUND: SLAP OF PLAYING CARDS — OUT UNDER:

FLANNIGAN (COUNT GIN-RUMMY SCORE TRIUMPHANTLY): There! That makes . . . lessee . . . forty-seven cents you owe me, Miss Rogers.

ANNE (MOCK DISMAY): Forty-seven! Sergeant Flannigan, I'm practically *supporting* you!

FLANNIGAN (CHUCKLES): Well, you're keepin' me in cigarette money, anyhow. Another game?

ANNE: Mmmm . . . I don't know. Maybe I should stick to bridge, or chess, or some game I understand.

FLANNIGAN (SCORNFULLY): Bridge! Chess! Sissy games, Miss Rogers! Now, you take gin-rummy . . . it takes brains to play gin-rummy!

ANNE: And, of course, a little luck?

FLANNIGAN: We-e-ell . . . a little luck . . . but mostly brains. How about it? One more game?

ANNE: Mmm . . . I really shouldn't, but . . . when do you expect Inspector Collins back?

FLANNIGAN: Hard to say. Might be minutes, or it might be hours. You know how he is.

ANNE: Yes. But I do want to see him before morning . . . Okay, Sergeant. Deal the cards. This time I'm going to take your shirt!

FLANNIGAN (CHUCKLES): That's what you think!

SOUND: SLAP OF PLAYING CARDS.

FLANNIGAN: Like the fellah says, Miss Rogers . . . "Lucky at cards, unlucky at love." I been married almost twenty years, so it stands to reason I gotta get the breaks *some* place . . .

SOUND: TELEPHONE RING — REPEAT AD-LIB.

ANNE: Maybe that's the Inspector now?

FLANNIGAN: I'll see.

SOUND: PHONE OFF HOOK.

FLANNIGAN: Police Headquarters . . . Homicide Bureau. Sergeant Flannigan speakin'. Huh? Whuzzat? . . . Murdered? Doctor Warren King?

ANNE (SOTTO): Doctor Warren King!

FLANNIGAN: No, Inspector Collins ain't here. But I'll be right out. Don't let nobody touch nothin' till I get there, see? Now, what's that address? 43 Crestmont . . . Okay . . . See ya!

SOUND: PHONE ON HOOK.

FLANNIGAN: Well!

ANNE: Well?

FLANNIGAN: Guess we ain't gonna get to play that hand after all, Miss Rogers. I got to go out on a case. A guy's just been knocked off.

ANNE: Yes . . . I heard. Doctor Warren King.

FLANNIGAN: That's right. Know him?

ANNE: I know *of* him. Society doctor . . . a psycho-neurologist, I believe. Quite wealthy, but retired from active practice now. Famous not only in his profession, but as a former international chess champion . . . Sergeant, if you don't mind, I *would* like to play a hand, after all. Mind if I come along with you?

FLANNIGAN: Well, no . . . I guess not. Only . . .

ANNE: Yes?

FLANNIGAN: Well, now, I don't like to bring this up . . . but I'd like you to remember one thing if I take you along. I'm handlin' this case, an' you're only an observer . . . see?

ANNE: Oh, but of course, Sergeant . . .

FLANNIGAN: Just listen, an' watch, an' above all . . . don't get excited. There's nothin' worse than havin' an excited female squawkin' in your ears when you're tryin' to think.

ANNE: I promise. I'll be as quiet as a mouse. Now . . . lead on, Macduff!

FLANNIGAN: Mac . . . ? Now, see what I mean, Miss Rogers? You're excited. My name's Flannigan . . . not Macduff!

ORGAN: UP FOR BRIDGE — DOWN AND OUT UNDER:

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS (2) ON WOOD — KNOCKER ON DOOR.

FLANNIGAN (SOTTO): Well, this is the place. Now, remember what I said, Miss Rogers. I like a pretty woman as well as the next guy, but when there's a job to be done, a woman . . .

ANNE (QUIETLY AMUSED): Should be scenery . . . not heard. Very well, Sergeant. I understand.

SOUND: DOOR OPEN.

LARSON: Yes? Who . . . ?

FLANNIGAN: Sergeant Flannigan. Homicide Bureau.

LARSON: Oh, yes. Come in, Sergeant, please.

SOUND: DOOR CLOSE UNDER:

FLANNIGAN: You're the butler?

LARSON: No . . . I'm Doctor Larson, Miss Mason's fiancé. This is Miss Mason, Doctor King's daughter.

FLANNIGAN: Meetcha! This is Miss Rogers. Newspaperwoman. Writes a column . . . "Second Glance." [17]

ALL — AD-LIB ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

FLANNIGAN (SUSPICIOUSLY): If you ain't the butler . . . what are you doin' in them fancy clothes?

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[17] Here is the first definite reference to Anne's job, although the entire first scene refers to it by implication.

LARSON: Fancy . . . ? Oh, You mean the white tie? Why, Miss Mason and I were at the opera when . . . when this happened. We just got home . . .

FLANNIGAN: Mmm-hmmm. Where's the body at?

DOROTHY: In . . . in Uncle Warren's study.

FLANNIGAN: Well, let's have a look . . . (SLIGHT FADE) . . . You touched anything?

DOROTHY-LARSON DENIALS.

ANNE: Er . . . Miss Mason, I noticed you called Doctor King your uncle. Doctor Larson, here, spoke of him as your father, I believe?

DOROTHY (IN MILD CONFUSION): Well, he . . . really he's neither . . . I mean, *was* neither. I called him uncle . . . sort of a courtesy title. A lot of people thought he was my father. Actually, he was my legal guardian . . . it's quite a long story. You see, when my parents died . . .

FLANNIGAN: Never mind. We'll go into that later. This is the room?

LARSON: Yes.

SOUND: DOOR OPEN.

ANNE: LITTLE GASP OF REPUGNANCE.

DOROTHY: TINY WHIMPER.

LARSON (HUSHED): You see, Sergeant . . . ?

FLANNIGAN: Yeah . . . I see. Quick an' messy. Looks like a thirty-eight job.

DOROTHY (HOPEFULLY): Did he . . . did he kill himself?

FLANNIGAN: If he did, he swallowed the gun afterward. There ain't none in this room.

ANNE: Sergeant . . . that chessboard. Those men. He seems to have been playing a game . . .

FLANNIGAN: Yeah?

ANNE: Yes. Let me see . . . (SLIGHT PAUSE) . . . Either a game or a chess problem. There are only a few pieces on the board. Strange! It *must* have been a problem, but . . .

FLANNIGAN (DISDAINFULLY): Okay, okay! It ain't important. Now . . . you say you was at the opera?

LARSON: I said we had *gone* to the opera. I . . . I was called out on an emergency call immediately after getting there. You know, we medical men always leave our names at the box office in case a patient calls.

ANNE (WORK ON): Doctor Larson, do you happen to . . . ?

FLANNIGAN (IMPATIENTLY): *If* you don't mind, Miss Rogers? Now, Larson . . . you left this house when?

LARSON: Oh . . . a little after eight, I should say.

FLANNIGAN: An' got to the the-*ay*ter?

LARSON: About eight-thirty.

FLANNIGAN: Uh-huh. An' when did you get this call?

LARSON: Shortly after nine. It was supposed to have come from a patient of mine at the Memorial Hospital.

FLANNIGAN: I see. So far, so good . . .

ANNE: *Supposed* to have come, Doctor Larson?

FLANNIGAN: Now, look, Miss Rogers . . . I ast you not to . . . !

ANNE: I'm sorry, Sergeant.

FLANNIGAN: Okay. Now, where was I? Oh, yeah . . . What do you mean, "supposed" to have come, Larson?

LARSON (CONFUSED): Well, I . . . upon reaching the hospital, I learned that no one knew anything about the call. It was very strange . . .

FLANNIGAN: Yeah. *Very* strange! An' you, Miss Mason . . . you waited at the opera till he come back?

DOROTHY: Well . . . no. You see, it was a miserable performance. Shortly after Robert was called away, I went to the ladies' waiting-room, leaving word with an usher to let me know if he returned. Often, when he's called like that, he doesn't get back until the performance is over. So when he was not back by the end of the second act, I left the theater and went to our usual meeting place.

FLANNIGAN: And where might that be?

LARSON: The Hotel Metropole Bar. I met Dorothy there about . . . oh, ten-thirty, I should say.

FLANNIGAN: Ten-thirty! You mean you was out answerin' a fake call for an hour an' twenty minutes?

LARSON: Well, there . . . there was a lot of traffic.

FLANNIGAN: Sure! In other words, then, neither you nor Miss Mason was in each other's company when this happened?

DOROTHY: Why, no, but . . . (GASP) . . . But surely you don't think either of us would have . . . ?

LARSON (SOOTHING): Of course not, dear. It's the officer's duty tc get all the facts of the case. We must help him. Which reminds me . . . there is one other thing which may be of some importance. I don't know. But as we were driving up to the house, we saw a man walking across the lawn that separates this house from the one next door. I'm not sure, but it may have been Mr. Harkness.

FLANNIGAN: Harkness? Who's he?

DOROTHY: My . . . my guardian's friend. Our neighbor. He also handled some investments for us. He and Uncle Warren often played chess together.

ANNE: Oh . . . *really?* Sergeant . . . don't you think it would be a good idea to question Mr. . . . ?

FLANNIGAN (WEARILY): Miss Rogers . . . that's just what I was gonna do . . . if you'd of gimme a chance to say it first!

ORGAN: UP FOR BRIDGE — DOWN AND OUT UNDER:

SOUND: DOOR CLOSE.

FLANNIGAN: Well, Mr. Harkness?

HARKNESS (STUNNED): Murdered! Doctor King murdered! I can't believe it! My best friend . . .

ANNE (DELICATELY): We . . . understand you were here earlier this evening, Mr. Harkness?

HARKNESS: Eh? Oh . . . oh, yes, I was. Doctor King called me a little before nine . . . asked me to drop over for a chess game.

ANNE: And you came?

HARKNESS: Of course. We both loved the game. We . . . we were interrupted several times . . .

FLANNIGAN: That right? Who done the interruptin'?

HARKNESS: Two visitors. One was Doctor Lincoln Owens . . . the young man who bought Doctor King's practice. The other was a Mr. Bishop . . . one of King's former patients.

FLANNIGAN (WRITING): Owens . . . and Bishop. I'll tell Headquarters to pick 'em up and bring 'em here. Well, go on. You were sayin' . . . ?

HARKNESS: Merely that they interrupted us. I don't know exactly what Bishop wanted. He came first, along about nine-twenty. King met him at the door . . . talked to him in the room across the hall. I could hear their voices only faintly. Bishop's was higher-pitched than King's.

ANNE: Angry, perhaps?

HARKNESS: I shouldn't say that. He may have been a trifle . . . pettish. At any rate, he didn't stay very long. No more than ten minutes.

FLANNIGAN: And this here Doctor Owens . . . ?

HARKNESS: Well, really, I . . . it's none of my business. I shouldn't say anything . . .

FLANNIGAN: You might as well talk now as in court.

HARKNESS: Well . . . Owens was angry . . . and I can't say I blame him very much.

ANNE: Angry? About what?

HARKNESS: It seems that when he bought out Doctor King's practice, he bought everything . . . including patients, good will, and so on. But King encouraged certain of his former patients to continue consulting him at his home.

ANNE: I see. That accounts for Bishop's visit?

HARKNESS: Exactly. By sheer chance, Owens was passing the house as Bishop left. Angered, he came in to confront Doctor King on the matter. He accused him of professional dishonesty.

ANNE: And Doctor King . . . ?

HARKNESS: Just laughed at him. Warren was . . . well . . . rather miserly at times. And Bishop was a wealthy patient.

FLANNIGAN: I see. But that still doesn't explain the chess game, Harkness. How come you didn't finish it?

HARKNESS: Finish it? But we did. I lost . . . as usual . . . and left here a little after ten o'clock.

FLANNIGAN (ELABORATELY): Oh, yeah? That's funny. These two claim they saw you walkin' across the lawn at half-past eleven!

HARKNESS: They . . . they . . . I . . . I . . .

FLANNIGAN: Well, how about it? You might as well tell us. I'll have footprint men workin' outside, anyway.

HARKNESS: Well . . . yes, it is true I came back. I came back tc apologize, in fact.

ANNE: Apologize? For what, Mr. Harkness?

HARKNESS: For losing my temper. You see . . . I had been handling some of Doctor King's investments. He had had some rather annoying losses. He . . . he took the attitude that I was directly responsible. We had words. I left in a huff . . .

FLANNIGAN: An' come back with a pistol?

HARKNESS: No! I told you . . . to apologize. We were old friends. It was silly of us to argue over money . . .

LARSON (BITTERLY): Particularly when it was neither your money nor his, but Dorothy's!

DOROTHY (CRIES): Bob!

FLANNIGAN (QUICKLY): What's that?

LARSON (HOTLY): This smooth-talking old crook . . . he and King were two of a kind! Both after all of Dorothy's money they could get before she comes of age or gets married . . . and regains control of the money her parents left her in King's trust!

DOROTHY: Bob, you shouldn't . . . !

LARSON: Investigate, Sergeant, and you'll find that between them the two have almost eaten up Dorothy's inheritance. That's why King disliked me . . . refused to let me marry Dorothy. He knew if I did, he'd have to give an account of his stewardship, and . . .

DOROTHY: Bob . . . please!

FLANNIGAN: No . . . this is interesting. Let him talk. Go on, Larson.

LARSON: That's all.

FLANNIGAN: It is, eh? I wonder. So you didn't like him, huh?

LARSON: Like him? Of course not! I . . . !

FLANNIGAN: Wait a minute, Larson. Before you go on . . . maybe I ought to warn you that anything you say may be used against you. You see . . . it's been clear from the beginnin' that you was the guy who could of killed the old man easiest. All I needed was a reason for your doin' it. And now, at last . . . I understand your motive!

ORGAN: UP FOR FIRST HALF CURTAIN.

COMMERCIAL.

ORGAN: UP FOR BRIDGE — DOWN AND HOLD UNDER:

ANNOUNCER: And now . . . back to Hot Copy! Doctor Warren King, retired neurologist and chess expert, has been murdered, and Anne Rogers is seeking a solution to a most perplexing problem . . .

ORGAN: UP FOR BRIDGE — DOWN AND OUT UNDER:

ALL — AD-LIB: EXCITED MURMUR — DOWN UNDER:

LARSON (EMERGING): But I tell you, officer, I did *not* kill him! I admit I didn't like him, but that doesn't mean I'd . . .

SOUND: KNOCKER ON DOOR — REPEAT.

ANNE: The door, Sergeant.

FLANNIGAN: Yeah. That ought to be them other two . . . (FADE) . . . I'll let 'em in.

SOUND: DOOR OPEN (OFF).

OFFICER (OFF): Sergeant Flannigan? These here are the two guys you ast us to pick up. Doctor Owens and Mr. Bishop.

FLANNIGAN: Yeah . . . good! You can wait outside, Mike.

OFFICER: Right, Sarge!

SOUND: DOOR CLOSE.

LARSON (OVER ABOVE SEQUENCE—ON MIKE): Miss Rogers . . . surely you don't believe I . . . ?

ANNE: Doctor Larson . . . I've been reminded that I'm only a spectator here tonight. But . . . tell me one thing . . .

LARSON: Of course.

ANNE: Do you play chess?

LARSON: Chess? Why . . . as a matter of fact, yes . . .

ANNE: I see. And you, Miss Mason?

DOROTHY: Well, naturally, I know the moves. I'm not a very good player, like Uncle Warren . . .

LARSON: But, Miss Rogers . . . I don't understand . . . ?

ANNE: Neither do I . . . yet. But . . . Shh!

OWENS (FRETFULLY) (WORK ON): Really, officer . . . my sleep is too precious to be disturbed this way. I appreciate your desire to clear up a regrettable case, but I can't see how my presence can . . .

FLANNIGAN: Okay, okay . . . keep your shirt on, Doc. If I ain't mistaken, everybody can go home in a few minutes . . . except one guy. All I want is for you two to answer a few questions. You! You're John Bishop, ain't you?

BISHOP (TIMIDLY): Y-yes, sir.

FLANNIGAN: Now, I understand . . . (PAUSE) . . . Wait a minute! Ain't I seen you somewhere before?

BISHOP: Why . . . why, it's possible. You see, I'm . . .

ANNE: I'm sure you have, Sergeant. You probably know Mr. Bishop better under his stage and screen name . . . Whitey O'Malley.

FLANNIGAN: Whitey O' . . . Why, yeah! I remember you now, Mr. Bishop . . . (CHUCKLES) . . . Golly, I used to laugh myself sick over them comedy acts of yours!

BISHOP (GRATEFULLY): Thank you, officer.

FLANNIGAN: I alluz thought that was a wig you wore, though. But your hair's really white.

BISHOP (SWIFTLY): Prematurely white, Sergeant. I'm really quite a young man still . . .

FLANNIGAN (CONSOLING): Sure, of course! Hope you'll be back in movies again soon, too, Whitey . . . I mean, Mr. Bishop . . . (BRISKLY) . . . Now, as I was sayin' . . . I understand you was here earlier tonight? About nine-twenty?

BISHOP: That . . . that's right.

FLANNIGAN: An' at that time you had some disagreement with Doctor King?

BISHOP: Disagreement? Oh, no, sir! I . . . I came for a nerve treatment, that's all. Doctor King was busy. He told me to come tomorrow . . .

FLANNIGAN: I see. An' when you left here, where did you go?

BISHOP: Why . . . home. To bed.

FLANNIGAN: Mmm-hmm. Now, you, Doctor Owens. You visited here tonight, too?

OWENS: That's true. But it was an unintentional call, I assure you. I was passing the house and saw Mr. Bishop leaving. Knowing that Doctor King was doing something of which I had several times accused him, I . . .

FLANNIGAN: Yeah, we know all about that. I believe you threatened King, didn't you?

OWENS (FLUSTERED): Threatened? Why I . . . I don't know. I was upset. I paid Doctor King a handsome price for his practice. I considered his actions highly unethical . . .

FLANNIGAN: Mmm! Then your squawk against King was . . . based on finances?

OWENS: Well, you might say so. But there was something else . . .

FLANNIGAN: Yeah?

OWENS: I . . . er . . . if we might go into another room?

FLANNIGAN: Say it here, Owens. It'll all come out in the wash, anyhow.

OWENS: But, really, I . . .

ANNE: Suppose we *do* go in the other room, Sergeant?

FLANNIGAN: Now, see here . . . ! Well . . . okay. Come on . . . (FADE) . . . The rest of you wait here.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS (3) — DOOR OPEN — CLOSE.

FLANNIGAN: Well, now, Owens . . . what's all the secrecy?

OWENS: I . . . I hardly know how to begin. It's . . .

ANNE: It's about Bishop, isn't it, Doctor?

OWENS: Why . . . yes! How did you know?

ANNE: Your eyes. They flicked toward him nervously when you suggested coming in here. What is it? Dope? Blackmail?

FLANNIGAN: Oh, for Pete's sake, Miss Rogers . . . !

OWENS: Blackmail. That's exactly what it is! You amaze me, Miss Rogers!

FLANNIGAN (WEAKLY): Y-yeah! Me, too!

ANNE: I thought it must be something of the sort. He was a great comedy star . . . once. Then he hit the skids . . . vanished. I was shocked to see him tonight . . . to see how haggard he looks.

OWENS (DELIBERATELY): I can shock you even more. Doctor King was extorting money from Bishop.

ANNE: What! Doctor Owens, do you realize what . . . ?

FLANNIGAN: You mean King shook down his patient? Why?

OWENS: Well — a patient often makes some unsavory confessions to his psychiatrist, in complete confidence, of course. Now, if the psychiatrist were so unscrupulous as to threaten to reveal those intimate details . . .

ANNE: But it's incredible . . . !

OWENS: Yes. It was incredible to me, too . . . until I discovered, after buying Doctor King's practice, that several of his former patients were afraid that he had already told me certain incriminating facts about their past lives.

FLANNIGAN: Then it wasn't only Bishop?

OWENS: No . . . there were more. And . . . it is true I had words with Doctor King tonight. I told him bluntly I meant to expose him to the police for his criminal malpractice. He . . .

FLANNIGAN: Owens . . . one thing. Where did you go after you left this house tonight?

OWENS: Go? I? I . . . I don't remember. As I say . . . I was upset. So upset and angry that I just drove around . . . to quiet my nerves . . .

FLANNIGAN: For how long?

OWENS (VAGUELY): Oh . . . maybe an hour or . . . (PAUSE) . . . But, wait a minute! You're not implying that *I* . . . ?

FLANNIGAN: I'm just wonderin' if mebbe the shoe wasn't on the other foot, Owens. If mebbe it was Doctor King who was threatenin' you with exposure?

OWENS (SPLUTTERING): Why . . . why, you impertinent . . . !

ANNE (CALMLY): Easy . . . easy does it, Doctor. No sense in getting excited. Sergeant Flannigan's merely trying to see all the angles. You claim you left here about nine-forty-five. But you have no alibi from that time till around midnight. And according to the Coroner . . . King was killed between ten and ten-thirty.

OWENS: I . . . I see. But to think I would have . . .

FLANNIGAN: I didn't say you would have, Doc . . . I just said you could have, an' might have. Like if, for instance, you started bleedin' some of King's old patients . . . for more dough yourself.

OWENS: That's not true. Is there anything else you want to ask me?

FLANNIGAN: No, nothin' just now. We'll go back to the others. This way . . .

SOUND: DOOR OPEN.

ANNE: Wait . . . there is one thing more. Doctor Owens, do you play chess?

OWENS: Why . . . yes, I do. A fair game.

ANNE: Thank you.

FLANNIGAN (SLIGHTLY OFF): Chess! Chess! That's all she's been talkin' about all night! Look, Miss Rogers . . . are you comin', or . . . ?

ANNE: Yes, Sergeant . . . I *am* coming. I want another look at that chessboard!

ORGAN: UP FOR BRIDGE — DOWN AND OUT UNDER:

ALL — AD-LIB MURMUR IN BG — SUSTAIN UNDER:

FLANNIGAN (SOTTO — HALF ANGRILY): All right . . . so now you get another look at the chessboard. So what does it get you?

ANNE (STRAINED): I don't know . . . yet. But I know it means something . . .

FLANNIGAN: Miss Rogers! It's just like I said before I brang you out here . . . women got no place in the detecting racket! With a million other things to worry about, you keep talkin' about chess . . .

ANNE: (SOTTO — MUSING): Obviously an end-game . . .

FLANNIGAN: Any one of these here suspects could of murdered King. Miss Mason, she wanted her dough an' her freedom. Larson wanted his girl . . . an' hated the old man. Harkness had been chiselin' money from his so-called friend. Owens hated the old Doc's innards for cheatin' him on a practice. Bishop was half cuckoo . . . from being blackmailed.

ANNE (ABSENTLY): Yes . . . and none of them have an alibi. So I still say the best clue is this chessboard . . .

FLANNIGAN: Okay, then! How?

ANNE: Well . . . a man doesn't play chess with himself, does he?

FLANNIGAN: King might have. If Harkness really went home sore like he says he did, King might have spent an idle hour workin' a problem.

ANNE: Only the set-up men on this board don't constitute a chess problem! You see, Sergeant . . . there's an impossible situation on this board!

FLANNIGAN: Huh? An imposs . . . ?

ANNE: Yes. A situation in which Black is in danger of losing, yet is not checkmated. The White . . . (GASPS).

FLANNIGAN: Well?

ANNE: Great heavens! Of course!

FLANNIGAN: What now, Miss Sherlock?

ANNE (SWIFTLY): I see it all now! But I won't ask you to take my word for it, Sergeant. I'll let one of the others tell you . . . (CALLS) . . . Look, everyone . . . We'd like your help for a moment. If you'll come closer, please . . . Thank you. Now Mr. Bishop . . . perhaps you can point out something to the Sergeant for me? On this chessboard . . .

BISHOP (TIMIDLY): I . . . I'm sorry, Miss Rogers. But I don't play chess.

ANNE: You don't? Oh . . . then . . . Doctor Larson? I know *you* do. If you'll help me, please . . . ?

LARSON (WORK ON): I'm really no expert, Miss Rogers.

ANNE (INSINUATING): You mean you'd . . . rather not help me?

LARSON: No . . . not that at all. I simply . . .

ANNE: Never mind, then. Mr. Harkness . . . I'm sure you'd be glad to help. And I know you're an excellent player.

HARKNESS (WORK ON): Why, of course, Miss Rogers. If I can dc anything to help solve this dastardly crime . . . (STRESS) . . . *anything* . . . I'll be only too glad to . . .

ANNE: Good! . . . (SIGNIFICANTLY) . . . I *knew* I could count on you, Mr. Harkness. Have you seen this board before?

HARKNESS: Why . . . er . . . no. As a matter of fact . . .

FLANNIGAN: You was in the room, though?

HARKNESS: Well, yes, but I didn't look at the . . .

ANNE: You haven't . . . touched the pieces?

HARKNESS (ALARMED): No! No, I wasn't near them . . .

FLANNIGAN (GRUDGINGLY): Well . . . that much is right. Nobody touched the pieces . . . unless maybe it was Doctor Larson oı Miss Mason before we got here.

LARSON — MASON: SWIFT DENIALS.

ANNE: All right . . . all right . . . it doesn't matter. Now, Mr. Harkness . . . if you'll come look at the board carefully . . . tell us what you see?

HARKNESS (AFTER PAUSE): But this . . . doesn't make sense.

ANNE: Ah?

FLANNIGAN: Whaddya mean . . . don't make sense?

HARKNESS (HELPLESSLY): These pieces . . . the arrangement of them. It couldn't possibly be a game . . . or a problem.

ANNE: More like a . . . haphazard placement, then?

HARKNESS (DUBIOUSLY): Yes. Except that . . .

ANNE: Or a code message of some sort, perhaps?

HARKNESS: A code message . . . (PAUSE) . . . Miss Rogers!

ANNE (SWIFTLY): Wait! You've seen what I saw, I know. You agree with me, then, that King deliberately arranged the pieces like that before the eyes of his murderer . . . realizing he was doomed, but knowing the murderer was not a chess-player . . . and hoping that by his last act he could send the killer to the chair . . .

FLANNIGAN (FUMING): For gosh sakes, stop talkin' and say it! Who killed King?

ANNE (TRIUMPHANTLY): Read the code message, Mr. Harkness . . . as Doctor King left it!

HARKNESS (AWED): It's right here in these pieces . . . the way they're placed. It's an impossible setup, because the black King is in check, but it isn't a mate. One piece endangers him . . .

ANNE: And in the language of chess the situation is . . . ?

HARKNESS: The white Bishop threatens the King!

ALL — AD-LIB EXCITEMENT.

BISHOP (SQUEALS): No! No! You won't take me! I have a gun . . . !

SOUND: SCUFFLE.

ALL — AD-LIB — D: Look out! He's got a gun!
L: Dorothy . . . down!
A: Sergeant Flannigan! Quick!
F: Cut it out, you . . .
H: He's crazy! The man's crazy!
B: You won't take me alive! Never!

SOUND: GUNSHOTS.

ANNE (AFTER PAUSE): Sergeant Flannigan, is he . . . ?

FLANNIGAN (HEAVILY): Well . . . it ain't gonna cost the State nothin' to prosecute *this* murderer.

ORGAN: UP FOR BRIDGE — DOWN AND OUT UNDER:

SOUND: AUTO MOTOR — BRAKES — MOTOR OUT.

ANNE: Well, Sergeant . . . thanks for driving me home.

FLANNIGAN: Don't mention it, Miss Rogers. A pleasure. That is . . . if my wife don't find out.

ANNE (CONSPIRATORIALLY): I won't breathe a word!

FLANNIGAN: Thanks! And . . . thanks, too, for helpin' out with the case tonight. I'd of caught Bishop myself, o' course . . . but it was nice of you to pitch in, like you did.

ANNE: Don't mention it, Sergeant. A pleasure.

FLANNIGAN: But, look, before you go . . . I'd like to know one thing. Why all that stage-actin' there tonight? You had me thinkin' every one of them people was guilty . . . at one time or another.

ANNE: I'm afraid it was necessary, Sergeant. You see . . . like many neurotics, Bishop was very clever . . . up to a point. He hated Doctor King for what King had done to him. But after deciding to kill him, he planned to shift the crime to someone else's shoulders. That's why he planted that fake emergency call for young Larson . . . to destroy Larson's alibi and make him the logical suspect.

FLANNIGAN: Yeah . . . he *did* look suspicious.

ANNE: As we now know, when Bishop broke in on Doctor King, the old man knew his moments were numbered.

FLANNIGAN: Yeah, *we* know that.

ANNE: We can assume that King tried to argue him out of murder . . .

FLANNIGAN: Yeah, so *we* can.

ANNE: But meanwhile, King arranged the pieces to reveal Bishop's name and intention. Since Bishop didn't play chess, he didn't know what was being done. So . . . we got the message.

FLANNIGAN: Yeah. So we did.

ANNE: But of course the evidence was too flimsy to convict a man in court. So we had to break Bishop with a sudden accusation. And . . . we did . . . and it worked.

FLANNIGAN (SIGHS): Uh-huh! Pretty good! We done all right . . . didn't we? Well, Miss Rogers . . . now you see how us cops crack cases like this. You come around some time again . . . an' if there's ever anything you want to know . . . just call on me!

ANNE (LAUGHS): Oh, Sergeant Flannigan!

ORGAN: MOCKING LAUGHTER MUSIC TO CLIMAX AND OUT.

MUSIC: THEME UP AND UNDER:

ANNOUNCER: HOT COPY, starring Betty Lou Gerson as Anne Rogers, is written by Nelson Bond and produced under the direction of Albert Crews. O-Cedar, the Greatest Name in Housekeeping, invites you to tune in again next Sunday afternoon for another stirring presentation of HOT COPY.

MUSIC: THEME UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER: CLOSING COMMERCIAL.

MUSIC: CLOSING SIGNATURE.

ANNOUNCER: STANDARD CLOSE.

THE UNIT DRAMA

The unit drama may be defined as a single complete program. A conflict is introduced, a plot is developed, the climax is reached, and a conclusion is made, all within the bounds of the one broadcast period. Such programs are usually broadcast in the evening and seldom run less than thirty minutes. They may run as long as an hour. There are a few such programs which are broadcast during the day, but these are exceptional cases. Very often a series of complete dramatic performances are broadcast under a common name. The *Cavalcade of America*, the *Lux Radio Theater, Author's Playhouse,* and *First Nighter* are all giving their audiences complete stories each week. However, the series of complete stories appear under a common program name. Sometimes even the framework of the program is the same each week. This is notably true on the *First Nighter* program. In several of the others named, the opening continuity introducing the program may be either the same or very similar. However, the story itself which is broadcast on that program is a complete story. A different set of characters is introduced and a new story is told each time.

In general, the unit drama is the most lavishly produced program on the air. Thus, the writer who is interested in this kind of program finds very few limitations on his fancy. Normally the best production directors and the best staff available are assigned to work on these programs. They are, for the most part, the top in nighttime dramatic shows and are given the best possible mounting. The writer, therefore, can use his dramatic tools to their utmost. Matters of theme, plot, setting, dialogue, and characters are all used in the normal manner. Such programs demand the best possible workmanship. In the field of sound and music also there are practically no limitations. In many such programs a full orchestra is available for cue music, theme and background scoring, and often original music is furnished for each program. In sound effects the writer may call for almost anything he desires.

In general, the finest in radio drama has been broadcast in this type of program. Such programs usually tend to be the showcase items in the broadcaster's list of merchandise. These are the high-class programs in the dramatic field. Being among the highest-priced programs in radio and therefore attracting the best talent, they have been given such liberal budgets as to make good theater possible.

Some of America's outstanding writers outside the radio field have written single plays for such programs. The late Stephen Vincent Benét, Archibald MacLeish, and Carl Sandburg have made several contributions in this area. Such men would find it impossible to write serials and would probably have little desire to create episodic dramas. However, since the unit drama can take one play from one author, it has been in this field that most of the important writers have made their contributions. Although radio has been notably lax in attracting outstanding writers from other fields, the success which it has achieved in securing authors to write single dramas is an encouraging note in a rather discouraging picture.

One other argument should be advanced for the unit drama. It is probably radio's best chance to produce experimental drama. That word carries an unfortunate stigma because it has been used by many college workshops that did carry on experiments, it is true, but they were experiments in techniques which had long been familiar to professionals and perfected by them. Nevertheless, in radio as well as in any other medium, the master craftsman must have a chance to try out new ideas. The unit drama program furnishes an ideal laboratory for this kind of experimentation because it does not commit the writer, the director, or the network to continue that particular experiment beyond one broadcast. If it is unsuccessful, that information and perhaps the reasons for its failure have been added to the pool of facts about radio writing and directing, and no great damage has been done. On the other hand, any techniques which are discovered to be effective can be included on other programs. Therefore, it offers a good proving ground for new ideas both in writing and production. When any art form ceases to experiment with new ideas, it ceases to grow. So far no one could accuse radio of this fault. There has been a constant reaching out after new ideas, new techniques, new formats, new approaches to material in the field of radio drama. This progressive attitude is encouraging and healthy.

The Dramatic Narrative

The dramatic narrative is a form which combines narration and drama to tell a story or present information which cannot be handled in any other form. It is, as the name indicates, a hybrid form, using both scenes and narration to present a program. It takes so many specific forms that generalizations are dangerous.

The dramatic narrative may be used to tell a regular dramatic story in plotted form, or it may be used to present non-dramatic material. The dramatic narrative form may be used to:

1. Tell a dramatic story that is too long and complex to cast into scene form and tell with dialogue alone.
2. Tell stories which would be most effective in the first-person narrative form.
3. Present information interestingly.
4. Present editorial opinion forcefully.

It is always more economical of time to tell a story than to dramatize it into scenes. Therefore, the dramatic narrative can be used to tell long plotted stories that could not otherwise be broadcast and still give them the force of dramatic handling. By combining swift-moving narration with short, forceful dramatic scenes much more story can be covered than could be covered by scenes alone. Orson Welles used this form effectively in his presentation of full-length novels in one-hour broadcasts several seasons ago. If only dramatic scenes had been used, much would have had to be omitted from the adaptations. However, by using rather long stretches of narration combined with short scenes, much more of the story could be presented. In this series also, the first-person narration technique was used. The narrator was often the central character in the story, or at least was the one telling the story, and as such also took part in the dramatic scenes.

Any dramatic story, or adaptation of a story from another medium, which is told entirely from the point of view of one character can be written in the dramatic narrative form. It provides an economical means of handling exposition, and has the additional virtue of keeping the point of view or point of reference of the story constant. It is a particularly strong form because the narrator also is an integral part of the dramatic scenes, and his presence in both narration and drama lends it a desirable strength and unity.

The use of the dramatic narrative to present information has proved extremely effective in many programs. One of the best known is *The March of Time* in which news is handled dynamically. The economy of talk and the power of drama have been skillfully blended to make a valuable and popular presentation. The *Cavalcade of America* has used the form to present many biographical dramas. The form proved particularly useful during the war when it was necessary for the Government to give the people important information. The Government wanted the public to be informed. The public wanted facts. The dramatic narrative form allows for a vivid and interesting presentation of this material. Such programs as *The Man Behind the Gun, The Army Hour, Report to the Nation,* and others did excellent work in this area, using the dramatic narrative. In all such programs the main interest was in facts and information, but the mold in which this information was cast and presented made it doubly effective.

If the author wishes to editorialize or has a theme which he wishes to impress on an audience, the dramatic narrative is a useful form in which to present it. The narrator can become the voice of the writer and say what the writer wishes to have said, using dramatic material to illustrate or to prove points. In this kind of program, the writer can use facts to state his case and use fiction to support it, but the fiction, being drama, can be a distillate of facts and become the more powerful for the dramatization. Thus, in a program like the series sponsored by OWI, *This Is War,* which was carried by all networks in the early phases of the second World War, power and reality of fact were made plain in statements illustrated by scenes obviously fictional, but which were typical of hundreds of similar events in real life.

Documentary drama is frequently and effectively cast in the dramatic narrative form. Suppose, for example, you had been assigned the task of making clear to an audience what happens to a town of five hundred people when a war boom suddenly strikes it and the town finds itself almost overnight a city of twenty thousand. It might be dangerous to treat this idea in imaginary scenes in dramatic form. It might be dull or statistical to present it in the form of a talk. But in the dramatic narrative, the author has a perfect medium for this particular task. He can combine reporting with editorial comment and pungent dramatic illustration and give the audience a "feel" for the subject which neither fact nor fiction alone could give it.

All these uses of the dramatic narrative have been found effective. This list is by no means exhaustive. It is only suggestive. The beginner will do well to avoid too much enthusiasm for any one kind of dramatic form and try them all. And it should be remembered, too, that each form has certain uses, and that it is the appropriateness of the form for the problem in hand and never the question of whether this is the form which the writer likes best, that determines the form.

Let us look now at the technical problems involved in casting material into this particular form. The first decision which the writer must make is whether to use a plotted or unplotted form. In general, fictional material will use the former and factual material, the latter form. If the program is to be plotted drama, it must conform to all the tenets of plot and structure set forth for the dramatic program. There are only two main differences. One is that the narrator may be one of the characters, and the convention of the format allows him to step out of the dramatic framework to talk directly to the audience and tell part of the story in narration. The other difference is that the writer may put into narration form most of the expositional material which he would otherwise somehow have to cast into dialogue. Thus the exposition can be handled more quickly and obviously. But the writer must avoid the temptation to use too much exposition simply because it is easy to handle; restraint is necessary.

With the exceptions already noted, plot is handled in the same way in the dramatic narrative as in straight drama. Narration is used to set up scenes and conflicts, but the actual meeting of protagonist and antagonist should still be presented in scene form. As the story progresses, it is well to use less narration and more drama.

In this form, theme is handled as in any other kind of drama. If the writer is using the form to editorialize, the theme becomes all-important. It is the purpose of the whole show and assumes a proportionate increase in importance. The theme becomes, instead of a peg to hang a story on, the central statement for discussion in a debate. The documentary drama, for example, in which the writer is presenting a point of view, places particular stress on theme.

The management of characters in the dramatic narrative follows a somewhat different pattern from that in the straight dramatic form. Sometimes they can be drawn somewhat more quickly because the narrator can talk about them. In a dramatic narrative, the purpose of which is to present information or to express an editorial opinion, character drawing is handled differently. To begin with, the characters are of only minor importance. They are usually presented, not as important people in themselves, but as representatives of a class of people or of a point of view. In the example already cited in which a small town is adjusting to the influx of war population, any scenes which are dramatically portrayed would be presented only to illustrate an idea. The people in the scenes would not be of interest as individuals, but rather as representatives of various shades of town opinion. Therefore, the characterizations would need to be only sufficient to tell the audience who they were, their position in the town, and how they reacted to the situation under discussion. Detailed study of their personal characteristics would not only be unimportant, but uninteresting. Characters in expositional dramatic narrative are typical, one-dimensional, and obvious rather than unusual and drawn in detail.

Dramatic scenes are usually short and climactic in structure. Since the narrator can be used to set the scene, describe what it is all about, and get the audience all ready, the scene itself can dispense with all these preliminaries and proceed at once to the point. In straight drama, it is poor dramaturgy to start a scene too near the climactic point; the audience has to be oriented; they have to know who is in the scene and where it takes place. They have to be allowed time to understand what dramatic action is under way before the point of the scene can be reached. In the unplotted dramatic narrative, this preparation is unnecessary. The narrator in a few words can prepare the audience for what is to follow, and the scene itself may be played in a dozen lines.

Here is an example taken from one of the author's programs written for CBS and called *The Midwest Mobilizes.* Notice how quickly a scene can be established and played, and still be completely understandable to the audience.

NARRATOR: Then came the march of events! A man at a conference in Washington walked over to a wall and stuck a pin in a map. That pin meant a powder plant. And the point of that pin descended on Charlestown, Indiana. That choice marked the culmination of weeks of planning and investigation, of flights that spanned the nation, of meetings with the Army General Staff, and finally, an act of Congress. And at the conference, the man with the pin said:

MUSIC: A SHARP STINGING CHORD, IMMEDIATELY FADED UNDER FOR:

MAN 1: That's the place. A four-hundred-thousand-pound smokeless powder plant goes there . . . the largest in the world . . . and a bag-loading plant to take care of the output.

MAN 2: All right. I agree. I'll issue the orders right away. When can we get started?

MAN 1: We'll be on the ground in sixty days!

MUSIC: SWEEPS UP TO COVER SCENE AND THEN FADES UNDER FOR NARRATOR.

The scene is only three speeches long and yet it tells its story. The characters are of no importance. No one cares who they are or what they look like or what they think. The only concern is with the progress of a plan. The words of the characters simply increase a little the audience's grasp of that plan and thus have served their purpose.

Since the scene part of the dramatic narrative is usually short, it is often played in a high dramatic key. The audience looks in on scenes only at their high points. Because of the fluidity and flexibility of the form, sound effects and music are often used rather elaborately. Sometimes it is effective to score an entire script with music. Music can be used to back narration and scenes, as a transitional device and to tell part of the story itself. Sound can be used liberally in the same way. Since so many of the scenes are played in a high dramatic key, they can take a lot of sound without its sounding irrelevant.

The dramatic narrative is a very useful form. It is not recommended to the beginner until he has undergone the more rigid discipline demanded by the straight dramatic form. The form should never be used as an easy way out. But it often does offer a solution to the handling of material which will not respond to any other form of presentation. It is flexible, versatile, and lends itself to many kinds of writing assignments. Properly handled, it can make exciting radio.

A good example of the dramatic narrative form is the following script from the series called *We Came This Way*, an NBC public service program. The series, one of the University of the Air programs, set out to recount the historical steps taken in the fight for freedom through the ages. This particular script was written to show the contribution made by Percy Bysshe Shelley to the cause of freedom for the common man. It was written by Frank and Virginia Wells and produced by the author.

This script uses two narrators. The first one is the narrator for the series, in this case Mr. Clifton Utley. The other is the character of Mary Shelley, who not only appears in the scenes, but tells much of what happens between scenes.

NARRATOR: One Englishman once said to another . . .

VOICE 1: And what is poetry, sir?

VOICE 2 (PONDEROUS): What is poetry? . . . Why, sir, it is much easier to say what it is *not*.

NARRATOR: If the great Doctor Johnson found poetry hard to define, other men have given us definitions.

(MONTAGE EFFECT FOR FOLLOWING:)

VOICE 3: Poetry is passion.

VOICE 4: Poetry is indignation.

VOICE 5: Poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity.

VOICE 1: Poetry is painting that speaks.

VOICE 2: Poetry is a most flattering disease.

VOICE 3: All that's not prose is poetry.

VOICE 4: Poetry . . . well, it's damned hard reading.

NARRATOR: There you have seven definitions of poetry. One for every day in the week. But maybe you prefer your own. Or maybe you would agree with that young poet of the nineteenth century to whom poetry was none of these things, but a *weapon*. A shimmering sword against the enemies of man's spirit.

MUSIC: SIGNATURE AND DOWN BEHIND:

ANNOUNCER: The NBC University of the Air presents *We Came This Way*, a new historical series of our listeners at home and overseas. With (NAME) as Narrator, we present Chapter Fifteen . . . "POET OF LIBERTY" . . . in *We Came This Way.*

MUSIC: SIGNATURE UP AND SEGUE INTO NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH THEME . . . BEHIND:

NARRATOR: England. The beginning of the nineteenth century. Only a few short years ago the idealists of England looked hopefully across the Channel to France. They saw in the French Revolution a flame that would light the world. But now the French Republic has been betrayed, and a dictator named Napoleon grinds Europe under the boots of his marching armies. George the Third is on the throne of England. A tired old Tory. Frightened by the democratic movement in America and by the French revolt, he sternly suppresses liberty of thought at home and strives to keep England a "right little, tight little Island." . . . But, as always, the idealists are undaunted. Tom Paine, hounded out of England, has gone back to America; but he has left behind him the manuscript of a book, *The Age of Reason.* Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, still sing of an ideal republic. Leigh Hunt prods the Tories in his liberal paper *The Examiner.* And, in a shabby bedroom on Poland Street, London, young Percy Shelley, just expelled from Oxford, pounds the table with his fist . . .

SHELLEY (NINETEEN AT BEGINNING OF SCRIPT, MATURES GRADUALLY . . . NAÏVE, IDEALISTIC, BUT NOT A PRIG . . . POUNDS ON TABLE): I tell you, Thomas, my pen shall be my sword!

THOMAS HOGG: Splendid, Shelley, but . . .

SHELLEY: I shall use my pen to crush all the enemies of mankind.

THOMAS: You'd better use it to write your pater for some money. You haven't a penny, you know.

SHELLEY: Yes, I know . . . Now, intolerance, Thomas . . .

THOMAS: Intolerance can wait until tomorrow. Write that letter, Shelley, or you don't eat.

MUSIC: QUICK BRIDGE.

SHELLEY: You got my letter, Father?

FATHER: Of course I got it. Why do you think I came down to London?

SHELLEY: I hoped . . .

FATHER: Now look here, Percy. You've got yourself into some mess. Expelled from Oxford, you wrote.

SHELLEY: Yes, sir, I . . .

FATHER: I'm prepared to help you if you'll come clean with me. (PAUSE) What is her name, Percy?

SHELLEY: Her name?

FATHER: Yes. Her name! Speak up. I'm your father, after all.

SHELLEY: Her name, sir . . . Her name is *Truth.*

FATHER: Truth! What are you talking about? . . . Truth!

SHELLEY: There wasn't any woman, sir. It was something I *wrote.*

FATHER: Percy, I warned you when you were a child! I told you this writing nonsense would get you into trouble . . . You're to give it up, you understand!

SHELLEY: Give it up!

FATHER: Remember, one day you'll inherit a title, become a peer of England, take your seat in Lords. You've got to think of your future.

SHELLEY: I am thinking of my future, sir. I mean to fight with my pen for a new kind of world.

FATHER: And what's wrong with this world? . . . It's treated *you* well enough.

SHELLEY: What's wrong? . . . Listen, sir (QUOTES)

> Virtue and wisdom, truth and Liberty,
> Are fled to return not until man shall know
> That they alone can give the bliss
> Worthy a soul that claims
> Its kindred with eternity.

FATHER: That some of your stuff?

SHELLEY: Yes, sir. It's from a long poem I'm writing.

FATHER: You mean there's *more* of it?

SHELLEY: Oh, much more. It goes on . . . "A brighter morn awaits the human day. Earth in itself contains the evil and the cure."

FATHER: Percy! . . . Stop!

SHELLEY: You don't like it?

FATHER: Of course, I don't like it . . . But to tell you the truth, I'm vastly relieved. Why, you're not poet at all, Heaven be praised. Your stuff doesn't even rhyme . . .

SHELLEY: But, sir . . .

FATHER: I want you to pack your things, march yourself up to Oxford, and apologize . . . and forget poetry.

SHELLEY: I'd as soon forget to breathe.

FATHER: You defy me?

SHELLEY: You and whatever else stands between me and my writing.

FATHER: Why, you young idiot! . . . You'll regret this, Percy. Mark my word. Not a penny will you get from me to support you in your folly. Not a penny! Poetry! A future peer of England! Poetry!

SHELLEY: I'm afraid, sir, that poetry sometimes happens even in the best of families.

MUSIC: BRIDGE.

SHELLEY: Listen to this, Thomas!

THOMAS: Fire away.

SHELLEY (READING): January 3, 1812 . . . To Mr. William Godwin, Skinner Street, London. Dear Sir: You will no doubt be surprised at hearing from a stranger . . .

THOMAS: No doubt!

SHELLEY: But I have read your book *Political Justice* and have been much impressed by your ideas. I have tried to put some of them into the poem "Queen Mab" which I enclose . . . (BREAKS OFF) It's all right to send him the poem, isn't it?

THOMAS: I don't see why not. Go on. Read, Shelley.

SHELLEY: I am young, and I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth. I have suffered much from human persecution. Even my own father has cast me off. But the ill treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles upon me. It is my desire to meet with you and talk about how to educate and improve mankind. I shall earnestly await your answer. Percy B. Shelley . . . Do you think he'll see me, Thomas?

THOMAS: Why not? . . . But watch out you don't fall in love with his daughter.

SHELLEY: The great William Godwin has a *daughter?*

THOMAS: A very beautiful one.

SHELLEY: Dark or fair?

THOMAS: Fair, I believe.

SHELLEY: Fair! . . . Oh, well, it makes no difference. My relations with the Godwins will be entirely on an intellectual plane.

MUSIC: UP AND SEGUE INTO LYRIC THEME BEHIND:

MARY: I was away in Scotland when Shelley first began coming to my father's house to talk about *Political Justice.* Then I came back and . . . Well, he forgot Political Justice for a while.

Shelley and I used to walk among the tombstones of the churchyard where my mother was buried. She had been Mary Wollstonecraft, the great champion of women's rights. We would read the epitaphs, munch raisins, and . . . talk.

(CRICKETS)

SHELLEY: I have a new poem, Mary.
MARY: Read it to me.
SHELLEY: Wait till I swallow these raisins (HE SWALLOWS).
MARY: Watch out! ! You'll choke.
SHELLEY: There (READING):

Upon my heart thy accents sweet,
Of peace and pity fell like dew.
Thy lips did meet mine tremblingly.
Thy dark eyes threw their soft persuasion
On my brain, charming away its dream of pain.
Gentle and good and mild thou art, nor can I
Live if thou appear aught but thyself,
Or turn thine heart away from me.

(A PAUSE)
(FEATURE CRICKETS)

MARY: Does the poem have a name?
SHELLEY: Just . . . To Mary. (PAUSE) I love you, Mary.
MARY: And I love you, Shelley.
SHELLEY: Then it's settled! We'll elope! Go to France!
MARY: I always wanted to see France.
SHELLEY: And you shall. We'll walk through France bareheaded like peasants! . . . No, wait! I won't let you walk. I'll buy you a donkey . . .
MARY: Oh, Shelley!
SHELLEY: You'll come, Mary?
MARY: I'll come, Shelley! . . . I'll come.
MUSIC: UP AND DOWN BEHIND:
MARY: I was sixteen, and I would have gone with him to the moon. So I put on my black silk dress and we took the night boat to Calais. Shelley bought me the donkey he had promised, but it was rather small . . . and *stubborn.* So most of the time we carried the donkey instead of the other way around. From

France we went to Switzerland, and set up housekeeping in a peasant's cottage. But it began to rain and the roof started to leak . . .

(FADE UP RAIN ON ROOF)

MARY: Shelley! Get a pail!

SHELLEY: What for?

MARY: It's raining in!

SHELLEY: Oh! . . . Wait! . . . I'll fix that! (RATTLES PAIL) There!

MARY: I never saw such *wet* rain.

SHELLEY: I tell you, I wouldn't mind a little English weather for a change.

MARY: I wouldn't even mind a little English fog!

SHELLEY: And English tea!

MARY: And muffins!

SHELLEY: Mary, let's go back.

MARY: Oh, Shelley, let's do!

SHELLEY: Though where our next meal is coming from once we get there, I don't know.

MARY: Who cares about food!

SHELLEY: You're a brave woman, darling. I'm afraid Truth doesn't pay very well. You've picked yourself a poor provider.

MARY: I've picked myself a genius.

MUSIC: BRIDGE.

MARY: Back home we scrimped, went hungry, borrowed . . .

SHELLEY (FADING IN, WRITING): My dear Thomas, I shall have to trouble you once again for the loan of five pounds. (FADING) I hate to make this request.

MARY: Then Shelley's grandfather, old Sir Percy Shelley, saved the situation . . . by *dying*. The estate was to have been entailed to Shelley through his father, but Shelley didn't want to be a baronet nor all that money . . . So he settled for an allowance of a thousand pounds a year. Then worried lest money would make us complacent . . .

SHELLEY: We won't spend it all on ourselves, Mary.

MARY: Of course not.

SHELLEY: We'll give your father some for his Young People's Library.

MARY: Of course.

SHELLEY: Oh, yes, and I want to send Leigh Hunt some, too, along with a letter of congratulation.

MARY: Leigh Hunt? What's he done?

SHELLEY: He's been arrested for libel.

MARY: Libeling whom?

SHELLEY: The Prince Regent. In *The Examiner.* Hunt called him a fat old Adonis.

MARY: Well, isn't he?

SHELLEY: Of course. Even the Prince, it seems, didn't object to the "fat" nor the "Adonis." It was the "old" he minded.

MARY: What happens to Hunt?

SHELLEY: A fine, and a warning that next time he goes to jail.

MARY: Jail!

SHELLEY: You *pay* for speaking the truth in this world, my girl!

MARY: Send Hunt some money by all means . . . But, Shelley . . .

SHELLEY: Yes, Mary?

MARY: Let's keep a *little* for ourselves . . . I'd like to take a house in the country before the baby comes. I want him to have a home . . . like other people.

MUSIC: UP AND DOWN BEHIND:

MARY: The baby was born and died, and two other children had come to us before we settled in the country. Near Marlow, it was. On the Thames. There, I wrote a novel about a scientist who brought a monster to life. I called it *Frankenstein.* And there Shelley made little boats of paper, sailed them on the river, and wrote his poetry . . .

MUSIC: BEHIND:

SHELLEY:

There is a people mighty in its youth,
A land beyond the oceans of the West,
Where, though with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
Are worshipped . . .
That land is like an eagle, whose young gaze
Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume
Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
Of sunrise gleams when Earth is wrapped in gloom.
Yes, in the desert there is built a home
For Freedom. Genius is made strong to rear
The monuments of man beneath the dome
Of a new heaven. . . .
Nay, start not at the name — America!

MUSIC: ACCENT . . . AND UNDER:

SHELLEY:

Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
Oh, could I win your ears to dare be now,
Glorious and great and calm; that we would into
The dust the symbols of your woe,
Purple and gold and steel; that ye would go
Proclaiming to the nations whence you came,
That Want and Plague and Fear from Slavery flow;
And that mankind is free . . .

MUSIC: ACCENT AND UNDER:

SHELLEY:

To defy power, which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be;
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

MUSIC: UP AND OUT.

MARY (NARRATING): We bundled Shelley's poetry up and sent it to a publisher . . . and waited.

VOICE 1 (FADING IN): Hmmm. Some poetry by that wild young Shelley who wrote *Queen Mab.*

VOICE 2: Better not touch it.

VOICE 1: I don't think these are political.

VOICE 2: No? . . . Let me see . . . (READING) "There is a people mighty in its youth, a land beyond the oceans of the West . . . Nay, start not at the name — America!" (LAUGHS SHORTLY) You think George the Third will make him poet laureate for that?

VOICE 1: Hardly!

VOICE 2: Besides, his stuff is dated. Poems about Liberty and Equality went out with the French Revolution.

VOICE 1: Still I hate to turn him down. I think he has *something.*

VOICE 2: Remember what happened to the man who published Paine's *Age of Reason.*

VOICE 1: That's right. Old Eaton! They sent him to Newgate for a year, didn't they?

VOICE 2: And to the pillory first. And Leigh Hunt's just got two years on another libel charge.

VOICE 1: Perhaps you're right. It wouldn't be safe to handle Shelley's stuff . . . I'll send it back.

MUSIC: BRIDGE.

SHELLEY (FADING IN): Mary . . . Mary, the poems came back. They sent them back.

MARY: Oh, Shelley!

SHELLEY: And I thought they were going to change the world. Help, at least.

MARY: Shelley, don't let them stop you.

SHELLEY: What can *I* do?

MARY: Publish them yourself.

SHELLEY: But won't that cost an awful lot?

MARY: I don't know about such things . . . Perhaps not more than a carpet would cost.

SHELLEY: But you've wanted a carpet for years. You . . .

MARY: Then it won't hurt me to want it a little longer.

MUSIC: BRIDGE . . .

FATHER: My dear, I'm afraid I have a shock for you.

MOTHER: Oh, Timothy! What is it?

FATHER: Our son Percy has published a book of poems.

MOTHER: Oh! . . . Does he still hold to the same opinions?

FATHER: He does.

MOTHER: And is the poetry in his usual style?

FATHER: It is.

MOTHER: Does it . . . rhyme?

FATHER: No, it doesn't even rhyme.

(A PAUSE)

(THEY BOTH SIGH)

FATHER: Well, my dear, I'm afraid we'd best give up any hope of Percy ever amounting to anything.

MUSIC: BRIDGE . . .

SMUG VOICE 1: Too bad about young Shelley. I know his father.

SMUG VOICE 2: Besides being a poet and a liberal, they say he's a vegetarian.

SMUG VOICE 1: Then what he needs to cure him is a diet of roast beef.

SMUG VOICE 2: I don't know what the country's coming to. All our young men taking to poetry.

SMUG VOICE 1: There's that case of young Lord Byron, too.

SMUG VOICE 2: Did you hear his maiden speech in Lords?

SMUG VOICE 1: Shocking!

SMUG VOICE 2: He actually dared to take the part of those Nottingham weavers. The ones who smashed the machinery in the stocking mills up there.

SMUG VOICE 1: Said they'd done it because the new machines had put them out of work.

SMUG VOICE 2: As if that were a reason.

VOICE 1: Why, this new spinning frame is the greatest invention since gunpowder!

VOICE 2: It and Cartwright's power loom.

VOICE 1: The Government should show a strong hand with these weavers who're making trouble.

VOICE 2: And with these liberals, too, who're sounding off.

VOICE 1: Freedom of speech was never a doctrine I could subscribe to.

(A PAUSE)

VOICE 1: Of course this new machinery's going to throw some men out of work. But that's progress.

VOICE 2: Yes, *that's progress!*

MUSIC: UP AND DOWN BEHIND:

MARY: A man named Cartwright had invented a power loom and a man named Arkwright a frame for spinning. And the Industrial Revolution had begun in England! The new machines could do the work of six men. Women and children could tend the looms. And women and children were *cheap.* So wages dropped to starvation level, men walked the streets and cursed. And sometimes they did more than curse. In Nottingham they broke the new machinery, and in Derbyshire . . .

MUSIC: OUT.

SHELLEY (INDIGNANT): Mary. Look at this morning's paper!

MARY: Why, it's got a black border.

SHELLEY: We're mourning the death of the Princess Charlotte.

MARY: Shouldn't we?

SHELLEY: We should mourn instead the death of English liberty.

MARY: Why? . . . What's happened?

SHELLEY: What's happened? (RATTLES PAPER) Here. Look. Buried on the inside page is the real tragedy. Three Derbyshire weavers have been hanged . . . then beheaded.

MARY: Oh, Shelley! What was their crime?

SHELLEY: Poverty.

MARY: The oldest crime of all.

SHELLEY: They were out of work. Hungry! . . . So they rioted . . . and died for it . . . Mary!

MARY: Yes, Shelley.

SHELLEY: I'm going to write a letter. To the people of England, calling for reform. I'll say that while we mourn the death of the Princess we have greater cause for tears: that men should have to resort to violence to get what is their God-given right.

MARY: They'll hate you for it.

SHELLEY (NOT HEEDING): I'll say that our mechanical genius outstrips our humanity . . .

MARY: They say it's progress.

SHELLEY: Progress! . . . Does progress mean that we run the machine, or that the machine runs us? . . . Are we so blind . . . have we so little imagination . . . that we can't think of ways to have progress without poverty?

MUSIC: UP AND SEGUE INTO MONTAGE THEME . . . BUILDS BEHIND:

(MONTAGE EFFECT)

VOICE 1: Did you see that blast of Shelley's about the Derbyshire weavers?

VOICE 2: He's gone too far this time.

VOICE 3: Who does he think he is that he can criticize the Government?

VOICE 4: He's dangerous!

VOICE 5: A radical!

VOICE 1: A libertine!

VOICE 2: Free-thinker!

VOICE 3: He ought to be run out of the country.

MUSIC: UP AND OUT.

SHELLEY: I'm the most hated man in England, I think, Mary. And all I ever wanted was for people to love each other a little more.

MARY: Shelley . . . Let's go away.

SHELLEY: Go? . . . Where?

MARY: Anywhere that's warm . . . and friendly.

SHELLEY (THINKING): There's Italy. Italy's warm. We could go there.

MARY: I'd like Italy.

SHELLEY: We could take a place by the sea.

MARY: Go barefooted in the sand.

SHELLEY: And maybe I could have a boat. I've always wanted a boat.

MARY: And we'll tell our friends only to send the reviews that praise you.

SHELLEY: Then we'll get no mail at all.

MARY: But we'll be happy!

MUSIC: UP AND DOWN BEHIND:

MARY: We sailed for Italy in March of the year 1818. I stood holding the baby Clare, and Shelley holding little William, watching the chalk cliffs of Dover until they had disappeared into the mist. Shelley never saw England again . . . In Italy we discovered another exile . . . another rebel . . . Lord Byron. Byron and Shelley became friends, yet never were two men more different . . .

SHELLEY: You're cynical, Byron!

BYRON: And *you're* naïve!

SHELLEY: I believe men may be all they dream of. Where is the love, beauty, truth, we seek but in our own minds?

BYRON: You talk Utopia! You've seen nothing of the world.

SHELLEY: And you've seen everything . . .

BYRON: Enough to know that there will always be Evil to be overcome . . . And *I* rather like the prospect.

SHELLEY: But if we strive for perfection . . .

BYRON: You keep your perfect world, Shelley. It sounds a bit dull to me . . . I'm afraid I'd be bored.

MARY (FADING IN, NARRATING): But another time, Byron would read us from his poetry and we would wonder if there were not two of him — the scoffer and the romantic.

MUSIC: SNEAK BEHIND:

BYRON:

> The Isles of Greece,
> The Isles of Greece,
> Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
> Where grew the arts of war and peace,
> Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!

Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.
The mountains look on Marathon,
And musing there an hour ago,
I dreamed that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

MUSIC: UP AND DOWN BEHIND:

MARY: Napoleon had been crushed at Waterloo. And now a great democratic fervor swept across southern Europe. We, in Italy, saw it happen. Saw the Piedmontese assert their freedom. Genoa throw off the yoke of Sardinia. Massa and Carrara set up republics. And, last of all, Greece revolted from Turkey. It was the beginning of a new Europe, and Shelley wrote "Hellas" to celebrate it . . .

MUSIC: SNEAK BEHIND:

SHELLEY:

The world's great age begins anew.
The golden years return.
The earth does like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn.
Oh, cease! Must hate and death return?
Cease! Must men kill and die?
Cease! Drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

MUSIC: UP AND DOWN BEHIND:

MARY: We were living now in a villa by the sea, near Naples. The children ran naked on the sands and turned pure gold. And, hidden away behind the rocks, Shelley was writing what I think was some of his greatest poetry. Italy smiled on us. Then, quite suddenly one day, our baby Clare was taken sick. We sent for a doctor, and I held her in my arms and waited, watching the hands of the clock crawl around . . .

(SLOW TICKING OF BIG CLOCK)

MARY (LOW): Will the doctor ever come, Shelley?

SHELLEY: He'll come, Mary.

MARY: She's so ill. Look at her . . . Like marble.

Shelley (pause . . . then quick alarm): Mary, give me the baby.

Mary: No, Shelley. No!

Shelley: You must.

Mary: No! . . . Why do you . . .

Shelley: Mary, don't you understand? . . . The baby . . . She's *dead.*

Music: sneak behind:

Shelley (reading to mary):

And now despair itself is mild,
Even as the wind and waters are.
I would lie down like a tired child
And weep away this life of care
That I have borne and still must bear
Till death like sleep might steal o'er me . . .

Mary (interrupts): No, Shelley! No more. It's too sad.

(Pause)

Shelley: I don't think I shall ever write another line, Mary.

Music: up and out.

Mary: But he did write. One day word came from England of the Manchester Massacre. Sixty thousand men, women, and children from the factories of Manchester had gathered to petition Parliament to better their condition. The cavalry was called out to ride them down. And six hundred were killed or wounded . . . I saw the old look come into Shelley's face. And that afternoon I found him, hidden away behind a rock on the beach, writing . . .

Shelley (fading on):

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?
Have ye leisure, comfort calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
(fading) With your pain and with your fear?

Mary: Shelley's "Song to the Men of England" wasn't a great poem. It wasn't even a very good poem. He was too angry . . . But when I read it, I knew he hadn't given up, that he'd keep on struggling for what he believed in, to the end . . . We had a new friend now. His name was Trelawney and he was a sailor, full of talk of ships and the sea. That made Shelley remember an old dream . . .

SHELLEY: You know that boat I've always talked about, Mary?

MARY: Yes, Shelley.

SHELLEY: I'm going to have it built. (PAUSE) Why do you look like that?

MARY: I . . . I don't know. I just feel afraid.

SHELLEY: Afraid? Why?

MARY: I can't explain. (LIGHTLY) Maybe because you'll get to writing or reading and forget to steer.

SHELLEY: No, I won't. Trelawney will teach me all about steering. (PAUSE) I want the boat to be lean and graceful, Mary. With a great splendor of sail! . . . And I think I'll call it the "Ariel" . . . Yes, the "Ariel!"

MUSIC: UP AND DOWN BEHIND:

MARY: I don't know why, but from the first moment I was afraid of the "Ariel." She was a lovely boat, and yet I hated her. The summer passed and Shelley played with the "Ariel" like a child with a toy. Then, that autumn he dreamed up one of his beautiful projects: a magazine in which anyone could say whatever he pleased. He persuaded Byron to put up the money, and Leigh Hunt to come from England to edit it. When Hunt arrived in Genoa, Shelley went down to meet him . . . sailed down in the "Ariel" . . .

(SNEAK IN WIND BEHIND)

I stood on the terrace and watched him go . . . saw the sails lift and the little boat quiver. Suddenly — I don't know why — I called out after him (PROJECTING) Shel-ley! . . . Shel-ley! . . . But the wind drowned out my voice. (PAUSE) Three days later — the day Shelley was to sail for home — there was a great storm. I told myself he would wait in Genoa until it was over . . .

(WIND OUT)

The storm subsided and the harbor was dotted with small boats coming home. Every sail looked like the "Ariel," but the

"Ariel" did not come. One day passed . . . Another . . . And another . . . I don't know how many.

MUSIC: OUT.

MARY: Then word came that a body had washed up on the beach. Byron went with me to see if it were Shelley . . .

BYRON (VERY LOW): Well, Mary?

MARY: It . . . It's Shelley.

BYRON: Are you sure, Mary? Can you be sure? The body . . . It . . . it isn't recognizable.

MARY: I'm sure, Byron. (A LONG PAUSE) What other man do we know but Shelley who would go sailing with a volume of Keats in one pocket and a Sophocles in the other?

MUSIC: UP AND DOWN BEHIND:

MARY: Byron and Trelawney made a funeral pyre and burned his body on the beach, as the Greeks had done. It was a lovely place for a poet's funeral, the sea in front, the mountains behind . . . After they had gone away, I stayed alone on the beach. A wind had sprung up from the west, and I thought of the lines he had written and I said them for his epitaph . . .

MUSIC: LIKE WIND . . . BEHIND:

MARY:

Be thou, spirit fierce, my spirit!
Be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth,
Ashes and sparks, my word among mankind! (CROSS-FADING)
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

SHELLEY (FADING IN):

The trumpet of a prophecy. O wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

MUSIC: UP AND OUT.

NARRATOR: Percy Shelley died at the age of thirty-four. He died before the Liberal Party was organized; before the Trade-Union Movement came into being to improve the working conditions of the British people . . . Before English democracy reasserted itself, and the great Reform Legislation of the nineteenth century was passed . . . Yet Shelley died believing that men could — and would — build a just and democratic world upon this earth. Two years after Shelley, Byron, the man who liked to think of himself as a cynic, died. He died fighting for an ideal; Greek Independence . . . But the

(MUSIC: SNEAK BEHIND:)

poetry of these two men will never die. It is part of English literature, part of our heritage . . . THE WAY WE CAME. For as Shelley himself wrote in his "Defence of Poetry" . . . "Poets measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature. They are the mirrors of the gigantic shadows that futurity casts upon the present; the trumpets which sing to battle; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

MUSIC: UP AND END.

CHAPTER 18

ADAPTATIONS

MANY BEGINNING WRITERS have the notion that the adaptation of material already written to radio dramatic form is easier than the creation of original material. Actually, the amount of work which goes into the making of a good adaptation is as much as or more than that which goes into the creation of an original play. By the time all the difficulties inherent in an adaptation have been surmounted, the adapter usually finds that he has spent more time than he would have needed to write an original play. Also the adapter gets only secondary credit; primary credit for the work still goes to the original author. For this reason, adaptations have not been as frequent or as popular among radio writers as one might suspect. There are a few programs on the air which use adaptations of well-known works of writers in other media; these form a somewhat limited but fairly sure market for those interested in making adaptations.

The adapter's task is to translate the theme and the essence of the adapted work into the medium of radio. He must take what the original author said, in whatever form and whatever other medium, and make that same message or story intelligible to a radio audience. The translation of the theme into a new medium is fairly simple and obvious. But what is meant by essence? This must be determined by the adapter himself, or by the original author, if his permission is involved. In some extreme cases perhaps the whole show can be almost bodily translated into radio form. Perhaps only the idea may be used and nothing else. Between these two extremes lies the usual procedure. Probably the central character and the basic situation, or parts of it, can be used and adapted to the medium of radio.

The adapter has a free hand within the limits outlined above.

The original story may have censorable material which would pass muster in its original medium, but which would not be acceptable on the air. This material must be eliminated. Some of the material in the original work may be impossible to project in a purely sound medium. The amount of time which will be available to the adapter is fixed and inflexible. Therefore, he must be free to do the job in the way which circumstances dictate will be best. It is obvious that a full-length novel cannot be adapted to a thirty-minute radio play without sacrificing a considerable amount of the author's original work. Such a requirement is one of the circumstances which both the original author and the adapter must accept as an inevitable limitation.

The adapter's first task is to become thoroughly familiar with the original work. He should be able to state the original author's theme in specific language. He must be able to diagram the plot of the original work and understand its structure. He must be able to spot the beginning of the conflict, the rising action, the sub-climaxes, the main climax, and the dénouement. He must be sure that he understands all the characters and why they follow the course of action which the original author made them follow. If the original work is carefully constructed and well written, study will answer all these questions. If the answers are not obvious, the work is probably so poor that it is not worth adapting for radio. Finally, the adapter must get the flavor of the dialogue, if the adapted work is dramatic, to see whether he can determine how the original author achieved his effects. Having done all this, the adapter can feel that he has mastered the original work.

One of the most difficult problems of adapting material from other media for radio is the condensation of the original work to fit the time allotted. Adaptations of short stories and one-act plays are easy to cut, but full-length plays and novels may cause the adapter real trouble. There are several ways in which the original work may be cut to meet the rigid time regulations of radio. It may be possible to bring it down to time by small omissions here and there throughout the entire work. This solution is usually impractical. It may be brought to time by cutting out those scenes or sections which will cause the least sacrifice of the original work. In the case of the full-length play and novel, the cutting may be achieved by using only the main plot and eliminating all sub-plots and all parts of scenes that involve sub-plots. In most longer works there is not only a major conflict concerning one or two central characters, but there are minor plots centering around secondary characters. These can be completely eliminated if necessary so that the main plot may be given full attention.

There is often the necessity of cutting down the number of characters. It is difficult for a radio audience to identify more than six or seven major characters in a half-hour play. There may be a larger number of minor characters if they are not too important and if their characterizations are not essential to the understanding of the play. These are what were called, in the discussion of characterization, service characters. Certainly, any adaptation of *Macbeth* might leave out the porter comedy sequence without doing great damage to the heart of the play. This elimination of characters will parallel the elimination of sub-plots and help to achieve the same end. It is possible, in extreme circumstances, to take the basic plot of the original work and write a completely new show based on the original material. This is an extreme case and would seldom be satisfactory.

The author always has one other alternative. He may choose to cast the adaptation into the form of the dramatic narrative, in which case much more material can be covered than can in most other dramatic forms. Even so, under normal circumstances it would necessitate considerable cutting.

The need for cutting creates the problem of choosing those portions of the original work for use in the adaptation. It is more than a mere problem of cutting to time. The important decision is the choice of remaining material which will give the audience the best idea of the essence of the original work. To reach this decision it may be necessary to devote a considerable amount of reading and reviewing of the original work and a process of trial and error until the proper proportion of various sequences is determined.

The adapter has the additional problem of making the characters intelligible to the radio audience. This problem is especially troublesome in the case of the novel or the short story in which much of what the reader knows about the character is told him directly by the author. Although the writer in those fields can talk about his characters and describe them to the audience, the dramatist cannot. He must make the characters just as intelligible, but in terms of dramatic structure. He must, through dialogue, through what other characters say about the character under consideration, through the manner in which that character conducts himself under certain circumstances, and through the other various techniques which the writer has at his command, show the audience the kind of person with whom it is dealing. The author of the original work may be able to do this with a few well-worded sentences. The dramatist, forced to shape all this into dialogue, may have to take longer to do the job. Since time is already at a premium, this necessity presents an added difficulty in the process of adaptation.

The adapter has the additional problem of forcing into a scene mold all the narrative and expositional writing of the novelist or the short-story writer. The original writer, having the license of the author to comment on the story as it progresses and discuss it with the reader, can tell his reader a great deal. The dramatist has no such privilege. He must communicate with his listeners through the medium of dialogue alone. The adapter, then, has the problem of creating scenes which will substitute for the effect created by the expositional writing of the original author.

The adapter also faces the problem of capturing the color and the atmosphere of places and people about which the author has written and about which the author may know much, but about which the adapter may know absolutely nothing. If the radio writer has any choice, he will not attempt to adapt material which is completely foreign to his own background. Occasionally, however, he must work on assignments and do a script for which he is basically unfitted. In this case, he must fall back on the author's picture, as created in the original work, and reinforce it with enough research work to translate that atmosphere and those people into a dramatic form.

One of the problems which will most delight the radio writer is the privilege – and the necessity – of rewriting most of the novelist's and short-story writer's dialogue. The novelist and short-story writer usually write literary dialogue. While it may pass for normal speech in print, it generally sounds stiff and bookish when spoken. Since dialogue is the radio writer's special métier, he can, with a considerable degree of skill (and usually pleasure), do this rewriting. Whether he enjoys it or not, it must be done.

Even the dramatic dialogue as it may appear in a one-act or full-length play usually has to be rewritten for radio. Stage dialogue is written with the full knowledge of the playwright that the audience is not only hearing but seeing. He writes action, gestures, "business" into his play. He is strongly dependent upon visual cues to help project the action and the ideas of his play. These the radio writer must do without. This limitation often requires a complete rewrite of dialogue. All elements of the dialogue in a play which are dependent on sight or on "business" for their understanding must be taken out of the script, and appropriate sound or music or additional dialogue added to tell the audience what the playwright wanted it to know.

Much more adaptation possibly may be done in the future than is being done at the present. Certainly, the whole field of world literature should be tapped and properly adapted for radio. An interesting serial program has been built by presenting a full-length novel over a period of three or four weeks in the same manner in which a daytime serial is done. When each novel is completed, a new one is started immediately. There is no reason for denying the radio audience the best of the world's great writing, because much of it can be adapted to radio form. Undoubtedly this is one of the matters which we will some day learn better how to handle.

THE SOURCES OF ADAPTATION MATERIALS

The field of the one-act play is probably the easiest source to which the adapter can turn. The playing time on the average one-act play will run anywhere from twelve to thirty minutes. Thus, almost any one-act play could probably be adapted to either a fifteen- or thirty-minute program on the air without too much difficulty of condensation or elaboration.

The one-act play has the additional advantage of being already in dialogue form. This would mean a minimum of rewrite on the part of the radio writer. There is the necessity of taking out all the stage business in the play and substituting either lines or sound effects for the visual cues which the playwright has used.

The real difficulty about the one-act play is that there are so few good ones. Out of all the hundreds of one-act plays which inhabit the catalogues of the publishing companies dealing in amateur drama, there are few examples of first-class writing. Since the one-act play is a comparatively recent development, there has been little great dramatic literature produced in this field. Comparatively few of our best dramatists have used the medium. Still fewer of those who have used the medium will permit their work to be given over the air. Most of the good, adaptable one-act plays which might be suitable for broadcasting have been done long since and the available supply has been exhausted.

The full-length play offers a much more enticing source of material for the adapter. The world's greatest dramatists have written in this mold and most of their work is available. What is more, most of their work is available to the radio adapter with or without royalty, depending upon whether the material is in the public domain or not. It is true that much of the drama of past centuries dates itself and would not make good listening in these days. It is also true that even a considerable amount of the current drama is not adaptable for the radio for one reason or another. There is still left a large group of plays which certainly are worth while and well worth doing. Many of them, of course, have been done. Some of them have been done several times. But the supply has been by no means exhausted. Here is a rich deposit which the adapter can draw on for the creation of dramatic programs.

The short story, like the one-act play, is of comparatively recent origin. It has always more or less existed in some form, but it is only in the last century that it has become recognized as a regular literary form. During that time, however, many markets have sprung up for short stories with the result that many have been written. Some of our best authors have worked in the field of the short story. The work of all these people is available in magazine or in book form. There are short stories, many of them well worth adapting for radio. They are a rich deposit of some of our best writers of the last few decades. They have the additional advantage, like the one-act play, of being short enough to adapt to a thirty-minute program without necessitating too much cutting.

The novel is another large source of available material for adaptation. The novel is probably the most difficult adaptation assignment for a radio writer. Not only is there always the problem of cutting involved, but there is the added problem of translating into dialogue the author's ideas from a completely different medium of writing. There is a serious question whether or not the radio can do justice in a thirty-minute adaptation to a full-length novel. Perhaps the best of a good book could be crammed into a full hour broadcast. To try to do it in thirty minutes will in almost every case be doing a definite injustice to the original author. In spite of the difficulties, the novel is the field in which many of the world's greatest writers have made their contributions. It seems a pity that such a good source of radio dramatic material must be passed by because of the stringent limitation of time. Several very good programs have been done in which a full-length novel was dramatized in an hour. In rarer instances, a few good adaptations have been done in a half-hour. Neither of these is completely satisfactory, nor are they fair to the original author.

There is one other source of adaptation of material which has not yet been mentioned. That is a miscellany of short subjects which can be expanded into a script. So far we have talked chiefly about the necessity of compressing material into radio form. It is perfectly possible that a fifteen-line poem might in adaptation be developed into a half-hour dramatic radio show. The outcome of this adaptation must be a legitimate interpretation. It is conceivable that a short editorial in the daily paper could be adapted to a full-length broadcast. So could any one of a hundred verses from the Bible. It must be granted that there is a thin line between using material as an inspiration for a script and adapting it into a script. If the author actually sets out to take an idea embodied in a few lines of someone else's work, and to interpret that to the radio audience by expanding it into a script whose theme and content is truly that of the shorter work, it would probably still be adjudged an adaptation. This kind of expansion from a small beginning opens up almost limitless possibilities in the field of adaptation. Certainly, if the writer is interested in this aspect of dramatic writing, he will not lack for subject matter.

An interesting development of the last few years is the possibility of adapting a full feature-length movie into a half-hour radio script. This has frequently been done for the *Lux Radio Theater*. The process involves cutting, the taking out of stage business and visual cues, compensating for the information which camera angles give to the movie audience, and adapting the dialogue. While the motion-picture script contains dialogue, it is as inadequate for the radio as is the text for a three-act play. It has to be rewritten and completely adapted to the new medium before it can be aired.

Comparatively few programs have consistently used adaptations, so it is less of a market than the original radio play, but there are a few fairly good and steady markets that buy nothing else. Some of these even buy on the open market. They are worth a try for the beginning writer.

4

MARKETING AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 19

THE MARKETS FOR RADIO WRITING

The surest and fastest way to earn a living by your typewriter is to write everything with the express intention of marketing it. Your intentions may not always bear fruit. Indeed, if the people who buy radio writing are aware of their responsibilities, there may be much of your output that never sees the light of a pay check. Certainly your early work will probably be halting and amateurish. The point is, it will continue in that vein unless you plan to make your writing pay for your bread and butter. If you approach every writing assignment that you are given with the idea of selling that assignment, your commercial début will come much sooner. For some reason, the word "commercial" seems to make a beginning writer shudder. He seems to feel that anything as gross as a pay check will sully the purity of his art. This is, of course, utter poppycock. Everything else being equal, the better a piece of writing is, the more demand there will be for it.

As was stated in the opening of this book, the writer's job is threefold. First, he must have something to say. Second, he must say it effectively, and third, he must find an audience. Without any one of these three, good writing does not fulfill its greatest promise. There is no point in finding something to say and taking great pains to say it well unless you can assure yourself of someone to listen to what you have to say. This is what is meant by commercial approach. The selling of a script is not so important as the acquisition of an audience. If you can write in such a way that an audience will turn to you for writing, the pay checks will follow as a matter of course.

Assuming that one has mastered the technique of writing for radio sufficiently to be ready for professional work, how does one go about it? Where are the jobs? What kind of jobs are they? Just exactly how does the beginning writer set about earning his living by the fruits of his typewriter? These are all pointed and legitimate questions which every beginning writer views with considerable alarm at the outset of his writing career. If that same beginner could only know with what real earnestness the people who buy are looking for good writing — if he could only know how little good writing is available — he would be encouraged. There are plenty of people willing to rush to a typewriter to earn their living. There are few of them who *stay* at their typewriters to earn a living, regardless of the quality of their output. Any person who can write well can make a good living out of it.

Getting started

There are several roads into the business of radio writing. Your choice of which of these roads you follow, will depend on several factors:

1. The kind of writing you do best.
2. The amount of time and money you are willing to gamble on your career.
3. The number of demands and responsibilities you have at the moment.
4. The combination of backgrounds you bring to the business.

The first road into radio writing is to get yourself on a station payroll. The ideal place to be is in the continuity department of a local station. Radio people, like people in any other profession, start at the bottom. Therefore, you will probably get your first job in a local station. The average local station does not have anything so fancy as a continuity department. Everybody on the station does everything. If you are on the payroll, you will probably write some of the continuity for that station whether you want to or not. However, if there is no writing job open at the moment, get any other kind of job on the station that you can. Once on the inside, you can learn the business of radio the way it should be learned — by participating in it. You will learn how the business is conducted.

You will gain an intimate and firsthand knowledge of the writing needs of your station in particular and of radio in general. The job will furnish contacts both in your station and with other stations which later may give you a chance to sell some of your writing.

Once you are on the payroll of a station, whether you are writing continuity or not, you can see what goes on in the station. You can see what commercial accounts the station has and those they do not have. A survey of the community in which you are working will indicate the commercial possibilities which have not yet been exploited. This is the beginning point in your writing career. Outside of station hours, get to work on the design for simple, inexpensive programs which prospective sponsors in your community can afford. Write sample scripts, have an audition record made to see whether you can sell your own ideas for programs direct to the sponsors. This kind of enterprise is the thing that station managers and program directors like. They live on advertising. If you can bring them advertising revenue through your writing and program designing, you can be assured of jobs, promotions, and commissions. This means income, which in turn means that you will have more time to write other programs.

The second road in is through the route of sustaining programs. No matter where you live, this road is open to you if there is a station in your vicinity. This route is a little more devious and takes a little more time, but the result is the same. There is, in every community, at least one group that is itching to go on the air. Normally, they will have some ideas, some talent, and some reason for being on the air. The one thing that all such groups usually lack is a writer to put their ideas on paper and weld them into a program. Here is where you come in. You do that job for them. It may be a local dramatic group. It may be a club. It may be a series of school programs. It may be civic groups that want to put on a program, or the Red Cross, or the Boy Scouts, or any other community service organization. Most radio stations will give time to any of these groups. It is a part of their public service policy and obligation.

Once you start writing such a program, you have open to you the facilities of the station in somewhat the same way that you would have if you were on the station's payroll. You will get acquainted with station personnel. You will have an opportunity and a reason to be around the station. Once you are welcomed into that inner circle, you can proceed in the same way in which you would if you were on the station's staff. You can look for commercial ideas and proceed to try to sell them. You have the additional advantage of having a program over that station; the station director and prospective sponsors can hear your writing being broadcast on the air. Listening to your own material being broadcast is the final graduate course in writing. From this you will learn many things which you could never have learned in any other way. If you are alert and intelligent and able to see the weaknesses in your own work, this is the best possible way to learn writing.

The third road in is through the advertising agency. Aside from local station operation and network sustaining shows, most radio programs in these days are built by advertising agencies. They will be one of your biggest markets as a writer. If you are interested in this approach to the work, try to get on the payroll of an advertising agency. You can do this only if you are in a city large enough to support an advertising agency. Most agencies maintain large offices in New York and Chicago and good-sized offices in Hollywood. The largest agencies will in addition maintain subsidiary offices in most of the other large cities over the country. If you have access to any of these cities, you have a chance for an agency job.

If you can by hook or crook get yourself on the payroll of an advertising agency in their radio department, you will have the same kind of advantages you would have on a station. The only difference between these two situations is in the caliber of work you will be watching and learning. On a local or regional station the commercials will be largely local commercials. An advertising agency may handle local transcriptions and even network accounts. In any event, you learn something of the business. You learn radio writing from an advertising point of view. And you should remember that advertising pays your bills. You get a very adequate idea of what markets are like and of the routines by which a show is built and put on the air. You will, among other things, learn to write commercial credits yourself and learn to write to order. If you can write these, you have mastered one of radio's toughest assignments. It is, incidentally, an assignment which is almost constant in radio writing. In commercial radio writing, the advertising agency lays down the specifications, and you, the writer, meet those specifications with original material. In commercial broadcasting there is a need for commercial genius which can confine itself to commercial specifications. If you can manage this, you have no need to worry about your career.

Some radio writing is done by the staff of an advertising agency. Most of the commercials on the accounts which the agency handles are written by the agency's staff. Most of the actual programs themselves are not written by staff members, but are farmed out to free-lance writers. No matter what kind of job you get in an agency, it will be valuable to your education. It will teach you the kind of procedure which is standard practice in the business.

Your fourth road into a radio writing career is through the field of free-lancing. This is the most lucrative field of radio writing and the one to which most writers eventually come. It is perfectly possible for an intelligent person who is capable of self-discipline to start from scratch in the free-lance field. The bulk of the radio writing which airs every day comes from free-lance writers. Whether they be programs created by advertising agencies, or network commercial programs, or sustaining programs, most of the important shows are farmed out by the agencies and the networks to free-lance writers. The continuity writing departments on stations or networks and the radio departments of advertising agencies usually do not retain large staffs of writers on a payroll basis. Even a large network at a major origination point will not have more than five or six people on its continuity staff. The practice is to farm out most of the important writing work on contract.

If a beginning writer has a small stake, and is willing to gamble a certain amount of time in getting started, free-lancing may be the best approach. At any rate through one of these avenues a writer who is seriously interested in radio work can probably get a toe-hold. No matter whether you are working on a station staff, or for an agency, or as a completely free lance, the chances are that the bulk of your actual writing will be on a free-lance basis. You will be paid by the advertising agency or the station to do a certain amount of routine work on company time. What you do in terms of actual writing and creation of programs will probably be done after hours on your own time, in which case it is done on a free-lance basis. The only difference is that you have a better contact for marketing this after-hours output.

The writing life

Every beginner wants to know something about pay. This is natural and legitimate. The pay for single scripts on radio ranges from fifteen dollars to five hundred dollars. Five-a-week serials will pay from fifty dollars per week to much more. The average for a five-a-week serial will probably be in the neighborhood of two hundred and fifty dollars. Free-lance comedy is bought at five dollars a gag, and gag-writers are the highest paid members of the radio writing fraternity. A thousand dollars a week is the usual top pay. There are about forty or more such writers in the United States. This explains the high salary. If gag-writing were easy and many people could do it, the job would not command a thousand-dollar-a-week salary.

The average pay of a staff continuity job will run from twenty-five to one hundred and fifty dollars per week. Commercial programs will pay from fifty to five hundred dollars or more. A weekly average of two hundred and fifty dollars is good for a successful radio writer. A few of the top-flight people make as much as two thousand dollars a week, but this rate is paid to one in a thousand.

A question which few beginners ever ask, but a question which is of paramount importance, is the one of living. What about the writing way of life? Like all professions, radio has its advantages and its disadvantages. Which ones outweigh the others is an individual matter which each person has to decide for himself. All that can be done here is to point them out. The beginner can only make a decision after he has tried it for a while.

The disadvantages might be listed as follows:

1. In the most lucrative field (free-lancing) there is no fixed income.
2. Usually you must write to order; you must meet specifications.
3. In return for a fairly high rate of pay, you must write in large volume.
4. You must write under constant pressure. Deadlines are inexorable.
5. You must live under the constant fear that your fountain may dry up.
6. Your profession will tend to be an anonymous one.
7. Much of the time you will have to write material in which you are not vitally interested.

Learning to live on a salary which may be two hundred dollars a week for three months and ten dollars a week for the next three months is no easy task. It is human nature to scale one's living to one's income, whatever that happens to be. When income fluctuates, as it does in free-lance writing, you will not know what your income is until the end of the first year when you can begin to strike an average. Too many writers fail to recognize this fact and live on a feast-or-famine basis. The only sensible plan is to live on an absolute minimum while you are starting out, no matter what breaks you may think you are getting. After a year of such living, you can begin to make averages.

The business of writing to specifications may or may not bother you. Undoubtedly, there will be times when it will be irksome. You will wish to be free to do what you jolly well please once in a while. If you are lucky, you may be able to do just that. Much of the time, however, you will be hedged in by a definite set of specifications.

In spite of the fact that radio writers may have large incomes, they do more work for that income than do their brothers in the theater and the cinema. A successful playwright may write only one play a year and be paid handsomely for it, especially if he sells the movie rights. This is about the equivalent of five one-hour dramas, which would hardly be considered a year's work by the average radio writer. If radio writers were paid more per script, they could do less and better work. Radio might profit immensely if this could be managed.

The constant pressure of deadlines and the gnawing fear that you may not get an idea in time for tomorrow's script are the greatest disadvantages of radio writing. No matter how good a writer is, these worries are usually with him constantly. The demand of quantity, the inexorable deadline, and the fear of drying up have broken and burned out many a good radio writer long before his years of usefulness should have been done. If the beginner plans to earn a living in radio writing, he must recognize these two dangers and devise a means of combating them.

There are three answers which can be found for these constant fears. First, never take on more work than you can comfortably do. It is better to lose a few jobs and have a little less income, and do a good job on the work you have, than to attempt too much. That way lie stomach ulcers. Simple arithmetic says it is better to work twenty years at two hundred a week than it is to work five years at five hundred a week. The doctors will only get it in the end if you try to do too much.

The second answer to these dangers is to spend not more than half of your time writing. Remember that before you can write, you have to have something to write about. This means that you constantly have to be on the lookout for material. At least half of every working week should be spent in this pursuit. It is the one sure answer to the problem of running dry. A writer who is constantly filling up his reservoir will not need to worry seriously about this.

The third answer is rigid self-discipline. If you keep yourself writing on a more or less regular schedule and refuse to allow yourself any temperamental leeway, you will probably meet your deadlines. Procrastination is a universal human weakness. A writer who does not have to punch a time clock, and who always has plenty of encouragement in the idea that he must work when the inspiration strikes, is wide open to the temptations of procrastination.

Radio writers are not publicly known in the way playwrights and novelists are. They are less known than many obscure foreign correspondents. Recently writers have been asking for, and in some cases getting, credit lines on broadcasts. This is a legitimate request and should be granted. Until radio wakes up to the fact that writers must be nurtured and encouraged, it will continue to attract writers who are for the most part hacks. The good writers are now demanding and getting their place in the sun. They have as much right to feature billing as any actor, certainly.

The following items might be placed on the credit side of the ledger:

1. The income is good, compared with other occupations.
2. The writer has a greater audience in radio than in any other medium.
3. It is a profession that carries with it considerable prestige.
4. It leaves you free to travel and work anywhere. You can live in Maine and work in Chicago if you like. If you get tired of Maine, you can move without asking the boss.
5. It forces you into contact with many famous and interesting people.
6. You can make your own working hours and arrange your personal life to suit your fancy.
7. You can be independent of any one income source.

While the radio writer may get less per page than writers for the theater and the movies, in income he is still away ahead of many other occupational groups. If he is prolific and writes easily, he may earn considerably more than the Government will let him keep anyway. Writers are given deference in any social circle. Your occupation will open doors to you that are opened by few other means. If social contacts mean anything, they are available to the writer because of his work if for no other reason. People in general, for some reason, stand in awe of the writer as they do before most creative people. It is sometimes pleasant.

If you are gregarious by nature, the necessity of constantly meeting new people and gathering material for new writing can be a source of constant enjoyment. It may combine a necessary part of your profession with a delightful avocation. The writer is completely free to move among the great, the near-great, and the outcasts. There are few social barriers and few doors closed.

High on the list of advantages is the mobility which the work makes possible. To an individual with a desire for travel, writing is an ideal profession. Travel improves the background of a writer and need not, in any way, impair his work. The more a writer travels and sees, the more he has to write about. The beginner may have to keep in close contact with his markets for a while, but as soon as his work finds acceptance, the markets will come to him, wherever he is. His work is wherever there is room to set up his portable, providing only that it is reasonably near a government post office. As long as the mails run, he can stay in business.

The free-lance writer not only can arrange his comings and goings and his hours of work, but he can also be independent of any single source of income. This description may seem to sketch an ideal existence. As a matter of fact, it is. To a writer, at least, the advantages of the way of life far exceed the disadvantages. It is a way of life which can be rich and exciting. It may be hectic, but it need never be dull.

Marketing Procedures

If you plan to free-lance, get yourself a market book. Any kind of notebook will do. Set aside in that notebook a page for every script or presentation you write. It should contain columns for "date sent out," "to whom sent," "received back," followed by a column for comments. As soon as a script is ready, it should be sent out in a neatly addressed envelope containing the manuscript and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. Enter the date on which you send it out and to whom it is sent. When it is returned with the customary rejection letter, enter it in your book and *mail it out again the same day.* That script represents goods in your warehouse. You are losing money every day a script stays in your hands.

After a script has been rejected ten times, reread it. You may have enough objectivity now to see what is wrong with it. If you can, rewrite it. As soon as the rewrite is finished, send it out again. When it finally sells, enter the date and the buyer and the amount at the bottom of that page in your market book and you are all ready for the income-tax man.

Most buyers of scripts in these days will not look at an unsolicited manuscript until you have signed a release form. This form absolves the agency or station of any blame for stealing your stuff. It says, in effect, that they may do what they please with it. There is no need to worry about that. A reputable agency or station will not pirate your script. Before you submit any manuscript to anyone, it is a good idea to write and ask for a release form. When you receive it, fill it out and send it back together with the script. Having done this, you are on the road to becoming a professional writer.

Now comes the question: To whom do you send scripts and how do you know who buys what? The answers to these questions are printed every day in all the trade papers and magazines in the business. You should read *Variety, Broadcasting, Radio Daily,* and any other publications you can get as soon as they are issued. They are full of news about who plans to use radio advertising and what kind of programs are contemplated. They contain dozens of leads every week and month. Look up the yearbooks compiled by these publications. These will give you an accurate idea of what advertising agencies are active in the market. They will furnish you with an index of sponsors and their advertising agencies. The names of those that have large radio accounts will soon become familiar to you. Having found leads from these sources, follow them up. Keep sending in scripts and presentations until you convince them that you are in earnest. After you have submitted a number, some agency may ask you to submit sample scripts for whatever programs they have in work at the time.

If you live in a city where there are several agencies that are active in radio work, make personal contacts with them all. Take in samples of your writing. Tell them you are free-lancing and want a chance at whatever work they may have available. If they like your samples, they may give you a chance to try your hand at something. If you do a good job on this try-out, they may ask you to make a serious bid for the next job that comes through their office. Here is where persistence pays. One must recognize the difference between persistence and pestiferousness, but understanding of that distinction is taken for granted. Do not make the mistake of giving up at any agency after the first try. After you have submitted fifteen scripts or presentations at a given source unsuccessfully, you are in a fair way of becoming a professional. No one who is not seriously interested will come back after a "no" as many times as that. Buyers of radio material know this. If a writer keeps submitting scripts, they will soon begin to take him seriously. Once that point is reached, you will soon be asked to make a real attempt at a commercial job.

Stations and agencies are constantly interested in ideas for new kinds of programs. You should be always looking for new ideas. When you have one, make a presentation of it at once and send it to the most likely prospect. Keep doing that until the idea has been turned down by everyone on your list. A good many scripts have been sold on their fifteenth trip to an agency.

A program presentation should be as attractively put together as possible. In spite of the fact that it is the idea that counts, there is no use in giving yourself the disadvantage of bad packaging in the merchandising of your product. Make it attractive and make it pointed. Once the presentation is submitted, you have made your start. If the buyer likes the idea, you might be called for conference and asked to write another script or two. If these pass muster, you may have made a sale.

It cannot be too strongly stated that more beginners fail to become writers after the first rejection slip than at any other time. Persistence over the first weeks and months is the keynote to the whole business of marketing, provided you have the trained ability to do the job. You must, of course, constantly try to improve your work. But there is such a thing as confidence, and the writer must have a certain amount of it. When he needs it most is the very time when he has nothing to justify it. That long, empty period before the first pay check comes in is the most trying time in his professional career. Once even one person has expressed in the concrete form of currency a conviction that you can write, it is much easier for you to believe. The beginner must somehow get through that first difficult period on faith.

THE FORMAT FOR PRESENTATIONS

Many times the radio writer will be called upon to make a presentation of a program idea without submission of an actual script. If a writer is free-lancing and is trying to present a program idea to a possible buyer, he should do everything in his power to present a concise, accurate, well-organized description of his program idea, so that it can be absorbed with the least possible red-tape and the maximum of understanding. In order to accomplish this, certain formulas have been devised which seem fairly acceptable. Again, there is no standard practice in the form of presentations, and the one submitted here is merely one that has been found satisfactory. Every program idea presents its own problem, and some variation in the form of this presentation may need to be made. However, it will form a basis for an approach to the form of presentations.

A good presentation should have a neatly typed title page which shows the title of the program, the name of the person submitting the program, the name of the person or firm to whom the idea is submitted, and the return address and telephone number showing plainly on the title page. The first page of the presentation proper should contain a concise statement of the core idea of the program. The whole program idea should be summed up in one short paragraph. It may be a complicated program and require more than one paragraph for a complete explanation. It should be made as brief and as pointed as possible, however. It is good psychology to let nothing else appear on this page.

Page two of the presentation can show an estimate of the audience possibilities. Who would be interested in such a program? Why? How many people would be interested? What other competition is there in the general field? What similar programs are on the air? What does this idea have that competitive programs do not have? Brevity and conciseness should mark the presentation of this material.

On the third page of the presentation might come a detailed explanation of how the program works. It might be a very simple or a very complex explanation. Regardless of how simple or how complex it is, a complete and detailed explanation should be made in the presentation to show the prospective buyer that the author has thought through the possible developments and conflicts in the program.

A subsequent section of the presentation will show a plan of promotion for the program and indicate any co-operation that will have to be enlisted in order to make the program possible. Very often the program idea involves selling some organization or group on co-operation with the broadcaster and certain permissions might have to be obtained. It might be an idea for a program that would lend itself very well to exploitation by the promotion department of the network. In such a case, this virtue should be pointed out.

The next section of the presentation would show the staff needed for the program and a brief discussion of the personnel problems involved. If the program idea involves the finding of a certain type of person with a peculiar kind of background or aptitude, some discussion of the problems might be made in the presentation and some possible solution suggested.

Another section of the presentation should indicate a possible budget for the program. At least enough should be said to indicate whether it would be an expensive or an inexpensive program.

Still another section of the presentation will outline the possible difficulties inherent in the program idea and present an answer to each of these difficulties in case they arise. Much can be done in a good presentation by anticipating the objections to the program idea, recognizing the possibilities of such suggestions, and planting an answer to those difficulties in the original presentation. This will say to a possible buyer that the writer has done a careful, thoughtful, thorough job in this presentation and therefore might be a dependable person with whom to do business.

This section might be followed by a synopsis of the program for possibly thirteen weeks. Some types of programs — audience-participation programs, for example — would make a synopsis unnecessary. In a dramatic program the synopsis is one of the most important factors.

If the program idea involves actual writing of the script or parts of the script, include with the presentation at least one completed script of the program, together with a fairly detailed outline of two or three other scripts in the series.

The last item in the presentation should be an indication of the future possibilities of the script. Every prospective sponsor is interested not only in how good an idea is, but in how long it will last. It takes a long time to go through all the process of experimentation, of trial and error, that are needed these days to launch a new radio program on a national network. The idea must not be of a sort that burns itself out in a few weeks while it is still being exploited. It should have the inherent possibilities of going on and on and on. After all, a sponsor may spend large sums of money on a program, and he wants to get his money back. Ideally, he would like to buy a program which would go on forever. The longer a good program has been on the air, the more value it has. So, in the submission of a new idea you should be sure that you indicate its future possibilities and its ability to keep going indefinitely.

This over-all format for the presentation of the program idea is not obligatory, but it furnishes an idea of what should be included in the presentation and indicates the order of importance. A good presentation might include pictures, charts, sample recordings, testimony from various organizations — any matter which might help to elaborate or explain or endorse the program idea you are presenting. Never make the mistake of overwriting on a presentation. Boil it down to its basic essentials.

A Presentation of

TABLE FOR TWO!

A New Radio Program.

Submitted to: Station WXXX

Copies to: Joseph Doakes, Program Director
Joseph Blow, Sales Manager

Submitted by: John Doe
2046 Avenue X
Chicago, Illinois
Phone: Randolph 0000
Date: June 1, 1945

The Idea

Each evening, five or six nights a week, I have a guest for dinner at a really fine place to eat. There is a microphone at the table, and for 15 minutes I talk with my guests and others.

The conversation will be fairly sophisticated small talk dealing with these items: food, entertainment, personalities, atmosphere of the place.

I shall dine at a different place each evening beginning with the well-known spots to which WXXX already has lines and working out to perhaps lesser known places, but always interesting ones with good food, and - if entertainment is provided - good entertainment. The time should be about 10:30 P. M.

The Audience

All surveys show that the "class audience" for radio is small. Certain data would seem to indicate that WXXX's share of what class audience there is, is small in Chicago. It should be enlarged.

Certain experiments made in programming in the East indicates that when programs are provided for a "Class Audience," it listens. And interestingly enough, as you know, such an audience, once it is sold, is usually more loyal and more fanatical in its following of a program than the more average listener.

This program, done locally, will appeal specifically to the kind of audience that dines out, that goes to the theatre, that reads the New Yorker. It will include not only the economic but the intellectual upper bracket.

The competition for this audience is practically nil and it represents a comparatively untapped potential.

How The Program Will Operate

This is a commercial idea from scratch. It should be built on a participation plan, with a fairly high unit cost, but no sponsor having more than one program a month.

The first places for the sales department to approach are those to which WXXX already has lines installed. Once established the sales problem should not be too great. It would merely be a process of calling these places and offering them the spot for a fixed charge. It would amount to a kind of radio "Duncan Hines" visit at which most such places would jump.

Once the sales were made, I would follow up with preliminary interviews of the chef, the entertainment talent if the place provided it, questions regarding the history of the place, who comes there, what kinds of foods are specialties of the house, etc. From this preliminary interview, I would prepare notes which would guide me in an ad libbed broadcast, on the spot during the supper hour.

Such places as the Marine Room at the Beach, Vera McGowens in Evanston, and Irelands would be obvious bets. More out of the way places like Gold's on West Roosevelt Road where the Gypsy King always hangs out, and Mrs. Gibertini's in Highwood would be likely prospects.

Talk about these places, what they serve, national foods, who patronizes them, what famous people like to eat and so on will make an interesting, informal, somewhat sophisticated program that will, I think, build a following.

I should like always to have a dinner partner who is also either an experienced diner-outer, or a celebrity of one sort or another to add color, pace and variety to the program. I can always interview the chef, or the proprietor to add other voices.

The whole tone of the program will be intimate and colorful, and yet it will be practically solid commercial from the participating sponsor's point of view. The trick will be to keep it from sounding like a commercial, and that's what I'll be paid to do.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

ASSIGNMENTS

CHAPTER 9

1. Select the music from the titles suggested below, and write the continuity for a fifteen-minute program of recorded music. Plan it for broadcast on a small station located in the agricultural Middle West in a town of twenty-five thousand people. The program is to be aired at ten o'clock at night and slanted to an audience that likes the old familiar favorites. Choose the music from the following list:

A Night on Bald Mountain, by Moussorgsky. London Symphony Orchestra, Albert Coates conducting.

Rhumba Fantasy. Kostelanetz and his orchestra.

Big Rock Candy Mountain. Folk tune. Harry MacClintock, vocalist.

Artist's Life, by Strauss. Klieber Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Firebird, by Stravinsky. Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, Stokowski conducting.

An American in Paris, by Gershwin. Victor Symphony Orchestra with Gershwin.

Emperor's Waltz, by Strauss. Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Frederick Stock conducting.

The Old Chisholm Trail. Traditional. Mac and his Haywire Orchestra.

Nocturnes, Fêtes, Nuages, Sirènes, by Debussy. Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, Stokowski conducting.

Blue Moon. Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra.

I'll See You Again, by Coward. Leo Reisman's Orchestra.

Holiday For Strings, by Rose. Played by David Rose's Orchestra.

Tales from the Vienna Woods, by Strauss. Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, Ormandy conducting.

Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms, by Moore. Sung by Tibbett.

Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, by Mozart. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Bruno Walter conducting.

Blue Room. Benny Goodman's Orchestra.

Red River Valley. Traditional. Mac and his Haywire Orchestra.

Bolero, **by Ravel.** Boston "Pops" Orchestra, Arthur Fiedler conducting.

Blue Danube Waltz, by Strauss. Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, Stokowski conducting.

Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life, by Herbert. The Victor Salon Group.

Home on the Range, by Guion. Jules Allen, the singing cowboy, vocalist.

2. From this same list select the music and write the continuity for a program of recorded music designed for a medium-powered metropolitan station. The program is to be aired at eleven o'clock at night and is slanted toward a fairly sophisticated audience.

3. Again, from the same list select the music and write the continuity for a program of recorded music for a small-town audience that likes hill-billy music.

4. Select from the list above music for a light classical program of recorded music to be broadcast over a metropolitan station at the dinner hour. Select numbers with some lightness and gaiety that will be suitable for the occasion, and write the continuity.

5. From the currently popular music select five numbers that would be suitable for a program on which a very talented girl plays the piano and sings. There is an announcer on the program, and the girl is capable of light banter. The program should be planned for a metropolitan station for an airing at ten o'clock in the evening. Bring the artist as well as the announcer into the continuity.

6. You are to write the continuity for a program called "Music America Loves," which each week features the work of a great American composer who writes in the semipopular vein. The music will be played on the network at ten-thirty at night by a twenty-five-piece orchestra. The continuity can include something interesting about the composer and perhaps some of the details surrounding the various music selections to be played. The composer for this assignment is Jerome Kern, and the music will be selected from his numbers in *Show Boat, The Cat and the Fiddle,* and *Roberta.*

7. Design and write the continuity for a program centered around the idea of bringing the audience the flavor of different countries. Both the music and the continuity should be designed to accomplish this end. Make the *idea* of the program the important thing to which both the music and the continuity contribute. The specific program in the series is concerned with India and the following

music might be used for ideas. Make the program thirty minutes long.

Less Than The Dust, one of the Indian Love Lyrics from "The Garden of Kama." Played by the Weber Orchestra.
Temple Bells, from the same suite, sung by Conrad Thibault.
Indian Lament, by Dvorak. Played by Fritz Kreisler.
Far-Off India, by Strickland.
Indian Lullaby, by Edwards.
Kashmiri Song. Marek Weber's Orchestra.
Till I Wake. Marek Weber's Orchestra.
Song of India, by Rimsky-Korsakow. Played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra.

CHAPTER 10

1. Write a five-minute talk, including an introduction and a conclusion by the announcer designed to impart information. Bend all effort to pack as much information as possible into the time allotted and make it so interesting that no one could possibly leave his radio. Here are some suggested subjects:

   a. Building a personal library.
   b. Post-war transportation.
   c. Combating the moth menace in your home.
   d. Making a flower bed that blooms from frost to frost.
   e. A subject of your own choice.

2. Write a fifteen-minute talk, including an introduction and conclusion by the announcer, about your favorite hobby. Design it for a program called "Happiness with Hobbies," on which a different speaker appears each day to talk about a particular hobby. The entire purpose of this assignment is to interest the audience in your special subject.

3. Write a five-minute interview, complete with all questions and answers. This interview will be one unit of three in a fifteen-minute program entitled "People Do the Darnedest Things." In addition to your interview, also write the announcer's general introduction to the whole program and his introduction of your subject. Pick an actual person in school or on the campus, interview that person before you prepare your copy, and try to get the "feel" of his speech in your copy for him. Try to find, as a subject, a student who has an unusual idea for working his way through school.

Students act as life guards, night watchmen, baby sitters, confidential secretaries, guinea pigs for laboratory experiments, and photographer's models. Look for students interested in unusual research projects. Try to find a student with an unusual hobby. Some of these suggestions might lead to finding a student that would make a very interesting interviewee.

4. Design and write a fifteen-minute interview program with some authority available to you, in which the interviewer's questions are written out and the interviewee is allowed to ad-lib the answers. Do the necessary research to understand the subject at least well enough to ask intelligent and pertinent questions. Write the announcer's opening and closing as well as the questions. Interview, as a suggestion, a graduate student in chemistry on the future of plastics, or a professor of economics on the problem of world currency, or your own teacher of radio on the commercial possibilities of television. These are only suggestions. You will find many others.

CHAPTER 11

1. Plan and write an audience-participation program based on the idea of using rival school students in a spelling bee. The program should be planned for a weekly airing over a local station. In order to fulfill the assignment, you should:

   a. Provide a title for the program.
   b. Write the announcer's introduction and closing.
   c. Write the necessary continuity to explain the program to the audience and introduce the contestants.
   d. Provide the words.
   e. Plan some means for timing the program and provide a cushion to allow the necessary time flexibility.

2. Listen to *Truth or Consequences, Dr. I. Q., People Are Funny*, or a similar audience-participation program that depends for its content either on testing the audience or doing some stunt to members of the audience. Then write the continuity for one of these programs, or a similar one. Provide everything that you think needs to be written for the program and indicate where the talent must ad-lib. This will, at a minimum, include the opening and closing continuity, all announcements of rules of contests or explanations of stunts and the suggestions for the questions or stunts themselves. Write whatever else seems to be necessary.

3. Design and write the necessary copy for an original quiz program based on the content of the local newspaper. This might be a good commercial program for the local paper to sponsor, with prizes being subscriptions to the paper and War Bonds. The questions might be based on news stories appearing during the week on the front page of the paper.

CHAPTER 12

1. Design and write a feature program specifically aimed at business and professional women. It should be fifteen minutes in length and planned to fit into a five-day-a-week series. The problem in this assignment is to build an audience from a specific group of potential listeners. To fulfill the assignment, the student must:

a. Decide on a title for the series.
b. Indicate the subject matter of the first week's broadcasts (five).
c. Write the first one of the series.

Such an audience might be interested in such subjects as "A Wardrobe for Business," or "Clothes Care on the Run," or "Office Manners for Secretaries," or a dozen other subjects. Do not use these, but find similar ones that might equally interest such an audience.

2. Design and write a feature program for the station located nearest your home, or for the town in which you are going to college, based on the idea of the scavenger hunt. Take this popular game and see how it can be best adapted to radio. The purpose of this program shall be to promote some community enterprise, such as The Goodwill Industry, Community Chest, Red Cross, or local charities. Make it entertaining, and at the same time arrange the program so that such an agency is benefited.

3. See if you can work out an original idea for a feature program of your own that might be suitable for a fifteen-minute spot on a metropolitan station once each week. Write the first script in the series.

CHAPTER 13

1. Write five station-break announcements of exactly twenty-five words each for Sunkist Oranges.

2. Write five station-break announcements for Wrigley's chewing gum.

3. Write a series of five one-minute spot announcements of the "slug" variety which sell as hard as they can for sixty seconds the Jameson Rodeo which is to be in the city for one week beginning the day this copy is to appear.

4. Write a series of five spot commercials, using a straight talk approach with a single announcer. The sponsor will be your local jeweler.

5. Write a series of ten spot commercials for the local Coca-Cola bottling works. Dramatize the copy, using three voices or two (including the announcer) and no sound effects.

6. Try writing a series of five jingle or gag spot commercials for Stetson hats. You may assume that any reasonable talent requirements can be met.

7. Write a series of five commercials for Oxydol to be used on the *Ma Perkins* program. Listen to the program and understand it and the product before trying to write this assignment.

8. Write an opening, middle, and closing commercial for the Kraft Music Hall. Make the opening commercial straight and give the other two a comedy lead-in.

9. Pick out a local merchant who you feel is a good prospect for radio advertising, but who does not now advertise by radio. Look over what he has to sell and then lay out a campaign for a week of spot commercials, using any approach that you think would be suitable and effective. Plan for two spots a day, or twelve in all.

CHAPTER 15

1. Read one of the scripts printed in this book (the instructor shall designate which one) and see whether you can state the theme — the core idea — in one sentence.

2. Turn in a list of five themes around which you feel a dramatic story could be written. Make each theme a complete statement in one sentence.

3. The first step in plotting is setting up a basic conflict. A conflict usually involves two or more persons. As a first step in plotting, work out a basic conflict and a rough sketch of the central characters involved for the following kinds of stories:

- ***a.*** A mystery story in which the story-line will hinge around the fact that the central character is color-blind.
- ***b.*** A love story based on a Cinderella theme brought up to date.

c. An adventure story which might grow out of the current attempt to set up a system of international airways. Let the scene be in some remote spot where it is necessary to obtain rights and to build an air terminal.

d. A homespun kind of story such as might develop out of an old lady's inordinate pride in having for fifteen years won first prize at the county fair with her home-canned pickles.

e. A pseudo-scientific story based on the expert and sinister use of hypnosis by a renegade psychologist.

4. Take the following basic and very sketchy plot idea and work out from it a complete plot outline, showing everything that happens. Include a synopsis of scenes, indicating how much is told and what happens in each scene. Work it all out to the point at which you are ready to write dialogue. Here is the simple plot situation:

> Old John Marshall lives out on the edge of town on a street which he has laid out and developed himself to provide a comfortable suburban atmosphere. Most of the lots on the street, all of which he owned originally, are still vacant, but a few he has sold to friends who want the same kind of neighborhood that he wants. One day Elliot Kent, a big-time real estate operator, comes to Old John with a proposition to buy up the whole street. He wants to put in a lot of cheaply built houses and make a flashy subdivision of it. Since this would ruin the location for Old John, he naturally refuses to sell. Kent, determined to have his way, uses his influence with the City Council to introduce zoning laws which would make the property undesirable enough to make Marshall give up. Marshall discovers this plot and blocks it. Then Kent, working through some acquaintances of Marshall's, succeeds in buying up some of the lots by having these people act as intermediaries. Finally, having bought several adjoining lots by such a process, he shows his hand to Old Marshall, saying that now he has enough ground to go ahead with his plan and that he will eventually force Marshall out by making the place undesirable for him. Marshall waits until Kent has made some improvements and then goes to work. He sets up big signboards all over his property, announcing it to be the new home of the Marshall Fertilizer Company, and proceeds to import enough

evil-smelling stuff to pollute the whole neighborhood. Kent tries to stop him, but he has owned the property so long that no new zoning laws can be made to apply to his own property. Kent finally gives up and accepts an offer from Old Marshall to buy back the property Kent had originally bought under false names. Marshall regains his property, including the improvements, and is ready to settle down to quiet living again.

5. Take the basic conflicts worked out in assignment 3 of this chapter and after they have been approved by the instructor, work out the same kind of complete outline and scene synopsis for each of these as you did in assignment number 4.

6. Here are the bare skeleton outlines of eight characters. Choose any four of these, develop them completely until you can answer any sort of question about them that the class may put to you, and write a prose description of each of the four in a hundred words or less.

a. Peter Carson is a male old-maid hypochondriac.

b. Mary Harkness, whose husband is a moderately successful executive, runs a large house without help, manages a four-year-old son, a nine-year-old daughter, and a fifteen-year-old son, and wonders where all the problems are that her friends are always wailing about.

c. James Harding has carried mail on the same route for eighteen years, knows all his people personally, and feels he is a lucky man.

d. Julia Gardner, at forty-five, finds herself a successful business woman, smart, attractive — and dining alone in a very expensive place.

e. Dorothy McGuire's husband is not quite as successful as she hoped he would be, and she wants to leave him because she no longer respects him, but she lacks the courage to go.

f. Arnold McGuire, Dorothy's husband, is working and worrying himself into a premature grave trying to live up to his wife's ambition for him.

g. Martha Lawrence, at sixty-five, has the distinction of having raised six sons to successful manhood without having meddled in their affairs.

h. Dean Henry Darnell, having led an exciting, satisfaction-packed forty years doing the thing he loved to do — working with his students — suddenly finds himself retired against his will.

7. From your intimate acquaintances, choose the most interesting personality and draw a word picture of that person that will make the rest of the class know that person as you do.

8. Use the four characters you chose from assignment number 6 and write a short dialogue for each one in which you show, by the way they talk, the kind of people they are.

9. Write four different first scenes for radio plays, concentrating on the establishment of locale and mood as outlined below.

a. The locale is Times Square in New York as seen through the eyes of a scared, lonely seventeen-year-old girl who does not know a soul in the city she is seeing for the first time.

b. The place is the bridge of a convoy destroyer, in the storm-torn North Atlantic. The officer of the watch is lonely and frightened.

c. The warm, comfortable living-room of a farmhouse just outside of Huntington, Indiana, just after supper on a night in January.

d. The front part of a corner drugstore in a town of two thousand population somewhere in Kansas. It is a hot July afternoon.

10. Try writing twenty-five lines of dialogue to establish each of the following facts in the minds of an audience:

a. That they are hearing a love scene between a college boy and girl, both of whom are being serious for the first time in their lives.

b. That they are hearing a conversation between an irate housewife who has ridden two blocks past her stop and a streetcar conductor who she claims did not call out the name of her street.

c. That they are hearing a conversation between you and the best-loved character in your home town.

d. That they are hearing a whispered conference between two duck hunters who are getting ready to sneak into their blinds an hour before sunup on a bitter cold November morning.

11. Write the lines and sound to tell the audience about a serious train wreck from the point of view of a woman in bedroom F, car 31, on the new streamliner.

12. Use sound and lines to paint a vivid picture of an amphibious assault on a beach.

13. Find a music cue, not to exceed twenty-five seconds of playing time which would serve as the final climax cue to a program which must end on a solemn, yet triumphal note. Use the school's recording library, listen to these five recordings, and pick the exact passage in the recording which best serves your purpose.

La Mer, by Debussy.
Prelude in C-Sharp Minor, by Rachmaninoff.
Tod und Verklärung, by Strauss.
Orpheus In Hades, Overture, by Offenbach.
Heart Wounds, by Grieg.

14. You are producing a thriller in which a huge sea monster grips a submarine in its claws and starts dragging it to the bottom. The last lines of the scene are:

> MATE: Skipper! Can you see anything in the periscope? What's got us?
>
> SKIPPER: Lord! It's . . . it's a sea monster!
>
> MUSIC: A SHARP, CRASHING STINGER CHORD THAT RISES TO A CLIMAX AND THEN SUBSIDES TO ACTIONLESS SUSPENSE.

The assignment is to find a music cue that will fill the specifications outlined above. Listen to some of the following records:

Sacré du Printemps, by Stravinsky.
Ivan the Terrible, Storm Music by Rimsky Korsakoff.
Ride of the Valkyries, by Wagner.
Fourth Symphony, last movement, by Tschaikovsky.

15. Find two minutes of eerie, faraway, unrealistic music that will be suitable to the background of a dream scene. Listen to some of the following music:

Morning, from the Grand Canyon Suite by Ferde Grofé.
Sirènes, by Debussy.
Shepherd's Tale and Lullaby, by Nevin.

CHAPTER 16

1. Design and write an opening for a half-hour dramatic show, using one of the plot outlines, Chapter 15, assignment number 5.

2. Write the opening scene of the story used in assignment number 1 above.

3. Write the last lines, transitions, and opening lines for the scene following for the first three transitions.

4. Pick out the scene from your outline that will have the most action and write it.

5. Write the rest of the story to make a complete script.

CHAPTER 18

1. Write a half-hour radio adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's one-act play, *Emperor Jones.*

2. Write a half-hour adaptation of Susan Glaspell's one-act play, *Trifles.*

3. Write a half-hour adaptation of James Thurber's short story, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,* from *My World and Welcome to It.*

4. Write a half-hour adaptation of Stephen Vincent Benét's short story, *Doc Mellhorn and the Pearly Gates.*

5. Write a half-hour adaptation of Ben Hecht's short story, *Miracle in the Rain.*

6. Write a half-hour adaptation of *Family Portrait,* the full-length play by Lenore Coffee and Joyce Cowen.

7. Write a half-hour adaptation of some part of James Hilton's novel, *Lost Horizon.*

8. Write a half-hour adaptation of your own choice.

CHAPTER 19

1. Pick out in your community a likely potential sponsor for a radio program. Make a thorough investigation and learn all you can about the prospective sponsor and his products or services. Make a market analysis and decide what audience that prospective sponsor should be trying to reach with his advertising. Then on the basis of this preparation design a program for him that might be broadcast over your local station.

2. Make an outline of the above idea in detail and write two sample scripts.

3. Work out a complete presentation for this program idea.

APPENDIX 2

GLOSSARY

Across the board: a show which airs at the same time five days a week. So called because it appears on the program board straight across in each of the first five days.

Ad-Lib: talking without script.

AFRA: American Federation of Radio Artists, the actors' union.

ASCAP: American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers, a music licensing organization.

Audition: a session at which talent or programs are listened to as prospective radio material. Actors, orchestras, and even whole programs are often auditioned.

Background: refers either to sound effects or to music held in secondary prospective behind a foreground scene; as in crowd backgrounds or music backgrounds.

Balance: the relative volume between separate elements of the program. Often used in connection with orchestra work. Balancing an orchestra means juggling the various instruments around until the distance of each from the microphone brings the whole ensemble into a balanced or properly proportioned arrangement.

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation.

Beam: that area around the microphone where the maximum pick-up is obtained. Also the term "on the beam" or "off the beam" refers to being in or out of the proper mike position.

BG: abbreviation for background.

Bit: a small acting part.

Blue gag: an off-centered joke.

Board: the mixing panel or control panel where the engineer controls and mixes the various outputs of each studio microphone.

Board fade: a fade which is made by the engineer on the mixing panel as opposed to a fade made by a cast member away from a microphone.

Break: more commonly called "station break," meaning the time between programs in which a station identifies itself.

Bridge: a piece of music used for a transition or bridge between scenes.

CAB: Co-operative Analysis of Broadcasting. This is the rating organization which determines Crossley ratings of program popularity.

CBC: the Canadian Broadcasting Company.

CBS: the Columbia Broadcasting System.

Character: sometimes called "character actor"; refers to anyone of older actors who do older characterizations in dramatic programs.

Chimes: signals commonly used by stations to help identify the station. Also the three notes of NBC which signal the telephone company that the program is over and switching arrangements can proceed.

Circuit: Any electrical circuit, but specifically in radio it refers to a completed program line over which a program can be sent.

Clambake: a show which has not been properly rehearsed and on which anything may happen.

Clear: refers to the clearing of literary or musical rights to broadcast any kind of material.

Cold: starting a program without any preliminary performance. It may be said that an announcer opens a show "cold," meaning that nothing precedes him.

Commercial: as a noun, it refers to the commercial copy which the sponsor includes in a program; as an adjective, it describes a program that is sponsored as opposed to a sustaining program.

Continuity: writing which is to be read over the air.

Corn: very unsophisticated, obvious kind of program or performance.

CR: control room.

Cross-fade: a situation in which one element of a program is being faded out while another is being simultaneously faded in, as when dialogue is cross-faded into music.

Crossley: a popular name for the rating issued by the Co-operative Analysis of Broadcasting.

Crowd: a single word indication that members of the cast shall act as crowd background for a scene.

Cue: any kind of indication for some element of the program to go ahead. It may refer to an actor's last line which becomes a signal for the next actor to read his next line. In this case an actor would say, "Read me my cue, will you, please?" "System cue" is a cue which indicates that a program is ended on a network. In the case of NBC, the chimes indicate the system cue. In the case of CBS, the announcer always says, "This is the Columbia Broadcasting System." A cue may refer to a hand signal which tells the actor to go ahead.

Cushion: refers to any material which can be variable in time and which will allow for absorbing any time change in a program. Cushion material is usually music which can be played faster or slower, stretched or squeezed, to accommodate time requirements of the program.

Cut: as a direction it means to stop doing whatever is being done. As a noun, it may indicate material which has been eliminated from the script or broadcast. If pages 16 and 17 are taken out of a script, they are the "cut" of the program.

Dead: may refer to the acoustical quality of the studio or its lack of liveness; it may also indicate an instrument which is not turned on, or a studio in which the mikes and control panel are not turned on.

Dead mike: a microphone which is not turned on or not connected.

Definition: a clear-cut transmission of the total frequency pattern of the program. Music which is not properly balanced sounds mushy and lacks "definition."

Dress: short for dress rehearsal, which is the final going through of the program before it takes the air.

Echo: an abbreviated manner of referring to an "echo chamber" and of applying an "echo" effect to a program.

E. T.: an abbreviation for electrical transcription.

Facilities: a generalized term which refers to all the transmission or telephone lines necessary to broadcast any kind of network program; even more broadly speaking, it may refer to clearing all the time on all the affiliated stations for the carrying of a program, and the word "facilities" may be used to mean the time and lines necessary for a network broadcast.

Fade: a gradual decrease in volume of any part of a program. It may be achieved by moving casts away from the microphone or by having the engineer turn down the volume controls on the mixing panel.

FCC: Federal Communications Commission.

Feed: sending a program out over telephone or transmission lines to any other given point. It is commonly said that the studio is "feeding the network." This means that the program going on in the studio is being put on telephone lines and sent to other stations for possible pickup.

Filter: either a mechanical or electrical device for distorting the sound output of the studio, usually by subtraction. A filter effect is the one commonly used to achieve the telephone microphone effect.

Flub: any mistake in the program, the most common being a misread line by an actor or announcer.

Fluff: same as "flub."

Free lance: a term applied to any worker in radio who does not have a regular job with some organization; writers, actors, and production directors all commonly do "free-lance" work, even working for several advertising agencies or several networks simultaneously.

Gag: a joke or a comedy routine.

Gain: technically it refers to the amount and control of amplification. Common usage has made a volume control of fader come to be called a "gain," and the process of controlling the volume on a program the process of "riding gain."

Gobo: an acoustical screen which may be put in the studio to screen off sound reverberations in any part of the studio. It is also used for isolation of sound.

Heavy: refers to a character actor who has a deep voice and can play impressive or menacing parts.

Hitch-hike: a short commercial for a product other than the one advertised in the main part of the program, but included in the regular program plan and charged to the same sponsor.

Ingenue: the young leading woman or a romantic lead.

Jumping a cue: means coming in too soon with a line or sound effect or bit of music.

Juvenile: child actor, male or female.

Kill: as a verb, it means the same as cut — that is, to stop whatever is going on; "killed," as a noun or an adjective, may refer to material which has been eliminated from the program.

Lead: refers to the leading man or leading woman, meaning the most important actor in the show playing the young part. The "leading man" is the actor older than the juvenile and younger than the character actor.
Level: refers to the "level" of volume of a program or any element in a program; bringing it up to "level" means fading in volume to normal loudness.
Live: refers to a program which is done by actual performers as opposed to a recorded program.
Local: a program which is aired over one station as opposed to a network program.

MC: may mean either master control, referring to that control room in the station which takes the output of all other studios, or it may mean a master of ceremonies.
Mike: radio slang for microphone.
Mixer: a mixing or control panel.
Monitor: as a verb, it means to listen to and check for quality; as an adjective, it refers to any kind of equipment designed for listening, as opposed to equipment designed for transmission or some other purpose, such as a "monitor" speaker.

Nemo: refers to any program originating outside the studio.
Network: a broadcast which is fed to more than one station over a system of telephone lines.

Off: means away from the microphone.
On: more commonly referred to as "on mike" or "on beam," meaning in the direct path of the best microphone pickup.
On the button: means that time is all right, or that the program is running on time.
On the head: the same general meaning as the two preceding terms, but more often used to indicate that a program closed on time.
On the nose: has the same general meaning as "on the button," with the specialized meaning that the program started exactly when it should.

PA: abbreviation for public address system.

Pickup:

a. The process of broadcasting a nemo program.

b. A reference to the general quality of a broadcast. An engineer may say, for example, "How's the pickup?" which means, "Is the quality of the broadcast all right?"

c. The point of origin of a program.

d. The mechanism on the phonograph which contacts the recording and which transfers the vibrations in the grooves of a record into electrical energy.

Pick it up: a direction which tells the company to increase the pace of the program.

Pick up a cue: a direction to actors, sound men, or musicians to come in faster with their portion of the program.

Pipe: means the same as "feed."

Platter: a slang term referring to an electrical transcription.

Playback: may refer to any kind of phonograph or instrument for reproducing music from recordings. Also refers to a session at which recording or an electrical transcription is played.

Plug:

a. A mechanical device for connecting electrical circuits.

b. A commercial announcement.

Projecting: the manner in which an actor reads a line when he speaks as though he were calling to someone away from the scene of action.

Provisional cut: parts of a program which are indicated as possible cuts, in case the time of the program runs long.

Remote: any kind of broadcast originating outside the studio. Used interchangeably with the term "nemo."

Repeat: the second performance of a program for another part of the network, commonly used in the East to service West Coast stations where the time lapse is too great to put the program at the proper time of day on the West Coast. More often called a "West Coast Repeat."

Ribbon: a non-technical term for a velocity microphone.

Schmalz: any overemotional or oversentimental treatment of program material.

Second business: actors who play the part of confidants to the leads.

Segue: the transition from one kind of music to another without a break in the music itself.

Setup: refers to the disposition of equipment and personnel in a studio to achieve proper acoustical effects.

Short: a program which is not long enough.

Signature: another name for the theme or opening identification routine on the program.

Sneak in: a direction for handling music or sound so that it creeps into the program unobtrusively.

Sound: a general term which refers interchangeably to sound effects, or sound men, or the result of sound on a program.

Sound effects: the instruments and equipment for the artificial creation of sound patterns on a program.

Sound man: a staff worker who manages the sound effects.

Sponsor: one who buys and pays for a commercial program.

Stand by: as a verb, it means to get ready to go; as a noun, it refers to a person or program which is ready to go on the air in case a scheduled program fails to come on as planned. Stand-by programs are always provided for talks because it is difficult to time the exact length of the program.

Station break: refers to the time between programs when the station identifies itself.

Stinger: a musical cue which comes in sharply with a *sforzando* effect.

Stretch: a direction to actors or musicians to slow down a program to help eat up time.

Sustaining: any program which is not sponsored.

Tag line: the last line of a scene or program.

Take it: a direction to go ahead with some portion of a program; a verbal cue which is used to substitute for a hand signal.

Theme: the music which is used to identify a program at the beginning and end.

Throw it away: a direction to actors to speak a line casually or in an offhand manner.

Tie-in: a portion of a program which originates away from the main point of origin and which is inserted into the program either by word cues or by arranging careful prearranged timing. For example, many programs originate in New York, but the commercials for those programs may be read in Chicago. The commercials, then, in this case, are referred to as "tie-ins."

Tight: refers to a program which is overtime and which must be played rapidly to bring it within the allotted time.

Trailer: is similar to a "hitch-hike." It is a short commercial announcement for a product other than the main one advertised by the program; it is inserted, however, within the regular program time.

Transition: a device for going from one scene or portion of the program to another.

Turkey: a program which does not quite come off or which is consistently bad.

Under: a direction to bring some element of the program down in volume to form a background for something else. Music may be faded "under" and "behind" dialogue.

VI: refers to the volume indicator, the meter which constantly records the incoming volume of a signal on the control panel in the control room.

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